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TULA

I am a Woman



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I would like to thank David Toguri, for launching me on my career; Yvonne Paul, for her help and support; and especially, love and thanks to my Mum, Dad and family for standing by me throughout.

My thanks to all those who gave permission for the use of their photographs.

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The 'Painted Lady' campaign. Photo by Sanders Nicholson

On the cover of Nick Carter's *Assignment Intercept*. Photo by Adrian Mott

Posing with the lionesses for a MotorWay calendar. Photo by Robin Saidman

Hostessing the '3-2-1' quiz show with Ted Rogers. Photo courtesy of *TV Times*

Holiday snaps. From Tula's personal albums

Glamour shots. Photos by Beverley Goodway and Peter Flodquist

With an elaborate hairstyle created by David Blair. Photo by Lee Higham

Modelling for the designer Suchin. Photo by Suchin's press photographer

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Cover for *Creative Photography* November 1981. Photo courtesy of Carlton Publications

Poster advertising Ritzy Jeans. Photo by Jeremy Mason

Beauty shot by Ric Blower

The Smirnoff Vodka campaign. Photo courtesy of International Distillers and Vintners

Beauty shot by Sanders Nicholson

With Mum, Dad and Pam. From Tula's personal albums

Chapter One

I remember that I felt very good that Sunday morning.

For the past month, as each weekend had come round, I'd felt panic-stricken. Every Saturday night I'd shoot down to Leicester Square in a taxi, with a girlfriend, to buy an early edition of the *News of the World*. My girlfriend would run out and get the paper and, as the cab took us home, we'd leaf through the pages, hunting for the threatened article. For three weeks I'd felt a great sense of relief when I found nothing.

All my friends told me that the *News of the World* was bluffing. 'They haven't got enough,' they'd say. 'The story isn't coming from you, and without you there isn't a story.' After three years of pressure and harassment, and those three weeks of direct threats, I'd come to believe it was true. It was all a bluff. They couldn't print the story.

So when the papers arrived that Sunday, I felt completely relaxed. I hadn't bothered to go to Leicester Square the previous night and I didn't even bother to pick up the *News of the World* first from the pile of Sundays on my doormat. I picked up the *Sunday Mirror*. I looked through the *Mirror*

then began to browse slowly through the *News of the World*, stopping to read an article about the Playboy Club, where my sister, Pam, had once worked. Then I turned over a page and it hit me. A picture of me, wearing a £1500 chinchilla bikini, which I'd modelled three years before, and a headline:

JAMES BOND GIRL WAS A BOY

It was as if someone had stuck a knife in me, I felt shocked and drained. I'd never thought it could actually happen – but there it was, in black and white.

The first thing I did was to phone my Mum. I was crying and half hysterical. All I could say was: 'Mum, it's in.'

She knew what I meant, of course. The *News of the World* had sent me a copy of the article weeks before ('for your comments') and I'd shown it to my Mum and Dad.

My Mum started crying and I heard her call: 'Bob!'

My Dad came on the line. His voice, as always, was calm and steady. 'Pull yourself together,' he said. 'I'll go out and get the paper.' He handed me back to Mum.

'What's in it?' she said. 'What have they said?'

I read out the article over the phone and my Mum said: 'Oh my God.' Then: 'Where's Pam? Is she with you?'

I told her that Pam was still in bed and then, I was crying so hard, I mumbled that I'd ring her back. I just couldn't talk any more.

I went into the bathroom, sat down with my head on my lap, crying and crying, trying to cry the shock and shame out of my system. I raised my head at last and there was the cabinet, with sleeping pills, a few feet away. For a moment I thought about taking an overdose. I felt I just couldn't see the day through, couldn't face what was going to happen to me. I'd worried so much about the *News of the*

World article, about what I'd do if it ever came out, and I'd often thought that an overdose would be the only way out, if it ever happened. Well, now it had, and I was in a state of panic. I don't really know what stopped me. It was probably the thought of my Mum and Dad. Several times in the past few months my Mum had said to me: 'You wouldn't do anything stupid would you?' And I'd told her not to be silly. Of course I wouldn't. The thought that my Mum and Dad would support me, whatever happened, stopped me from reaching for the pills.

I heard the phone ring again, and my sister, Pam, answer it. I came out of the bathroom. Pam was talking on the phone. She looked shocked. I spoke to my Dad. He said: 'You've got to pull yourself together. You'd better come home.'

But I couldn't face the thought of going home. I felt I must sort things out in my mind for myself. I must have sounded totally confused – I hardly knew what I was saying – every moment seemed unreal. My little world had suddenly been exposed. As a successful model I'd felt I could hold my head up to the world. I'd taken pride in what I'd been able to achieve. Now I felt nothing but shame.

The phone hardly stopped all morning – friends ringing up. They were all very sweet and sympathetic but, in a way, that made it worse. Their sympathy was genuine but they didn't really understand what I was going through. Nobody can understand who hasn't been through the same situation.

Eventually Pam said: 'We can't sit around here all day. Let's go to the park.'

London was having a heat wave; it was a beautiful day. Pam and I had planned to go to the park. The thought of

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facing people terrified me, but at the same time I was curious. I wanted to look around and see who had read the *News of the World* and who hadn't.

In the park I was convinced that every eye was staring at me. Everyone I saw seemed to be reading a paper and I felt they were all reading about me. Pam laughed and told me I was getting paranoid. 'Nobody's looking at you any more than they normally do,' she said.

We lay on the grass in our bikinis and began to soak up the sun. Nearby there was a man with a camera, taking shots of the park. Suddenly he turned his camera on us and took a snap and I instantly thought: he's from the papers. They're after me.

Pam was very comforting, but I remained tearful. My eyes kept filling up at the thought of what tomorrow might hold in store for me.

On Monday morning my agent, Yvonne, called. She had heard from the advertising agency that had hired me to do a calendar. I was due to appear at the press launch in Leeds at the end of the week, and the agency wanted to know if I was still prepared to do it. Yvonne told me that she'd covered up for me, told them that the *News of the World* wasn't true and that of course I'd do the launch. She wanted me to call the agency to arrange times and trains. I pulled myself together and made the call. I surprised myself: I sounded good, confident and unconcerned, and arranged to meet the agency man at King's Cross on Friday.

A phone call was one thing, but going out and about was another. I was due to take my Mum on one of our regular holidays to Italy on the Saturday and I had a lot of arrangements to make. I had to go to the bank but I just couldn't face it. I stayed in the flat all through Tuesday and

Wednesday and on Thursday plucked up enough courage to do some shopping at the local supermarket. The place was crowded and I didn't pick up any reactions: my confidence began to return. But it was shattered again when I went to my local shops. For months I'd been buying my vegetables and fruit from a greengrocer's round the corner. It was run by a couple of Cockney lads who always produced a wolf-whistle whenever I walked past the shop, and flirted with me whenever I went in. But this morning there was none of the usual cheerful cheek. The one who served me didn't seem to want to look me in the eye. Very coldly, he said: 'What do you want?' I was taken aback by his attitude but I told him what I wanted and he served me. When I left he made a very strange remark.

'Try to have a nice day,' he said. And then he laughed.

As I walked home I was overwhelmed by feelings and fears I hadn't experienced for years, an awareness that I was different, a freak, that when people knew they wanted to avoid me because I was an alien. My long struggle to achieve normality and acceptability seemed to have been for nothing. The *News of the World* had put my clock back to my teens.

Back in the flat, I happened to glance out of the window and saw Gregor walk by. Normally, Gregor never failed to look up at my window whenever he passed, but that morning he kept his eyes on the ground and hurried by. Gregor lived three houses down, on the opposite side of the street. Both our flats had balconies and our relationship had started with Gregor giving me shy looks as we both pottered about watering our plants. If I was sunbathing on my balcony Gregor would find all sorts of obvious excuses to walk past the house and look up at me: tinkering with his car, going back and forth to the shops four or five times

in a couple of hours. He was tall and good-looking and I found him attractive; but he seemed so very shy that I doubted if he'd ever summon up enough courage to talk to me. In the end we met over a taxi. One day I had to go into the West End for a casting and was looking for a cab. I saw Gregor, further up the street, obviously waiting for a cab too. So I walked past him, to be first in line. A moment later he walked past me, on the same manoeuvre, we exchanged smiles, got talking, and eventually shared the cab. I discovered that he was in show business too and we found we knew some of the same people. When he dropped me off he asked me if I'd like to have a drink with him one evening, I said I'd love to, and he promised to phone me. That had been a few days before and I'd been excited. Gregor was really nice. Now I knew that he must have read the *News of the World* and that he would never phone me.

It was a small thing – but it got me down. It made me think about cancelling the press launch in Leeds but I knew I couldn't. It was part of the job I was contracted to do.

I met Derek, the man from the agency, at King's Cross on the Friday, having had a couple of drinks to relax me. We got on the train. Derek was very sweet, told me I looked well, and offered to buy me a drink. We got on to the subject of the press, but very mildly, and I told him that the whole thing was in the hands of my solicitors. I explained that I was very worried about it all, but mainly because it would be so costly to sue a newspaper.

'Lawyers always paint the worst picture,' he said. 'What they don't tell you is how much you'll get out of it when you win. You should go into that aspect of it with your lawyer.'

'I don't want to discuss it at the launch,' I said. 'I just don't want to talk about it. Could you tell the PR man?'

Derek agreed.

At the hotel I had about ten or fifteen minutes to get myself into an outfit and pull myself together before the cocktail party to launch the calendar. I phoned my Mum and had a quick chat with her.

'Just think of me,' she said, 'and you'll be all right. Just hold your head up. I love you very much. We're all with you.'

As I went in to the party I was in a state of terror. The first person I spoke to was the calendar's Director, who'd been on the shoot with us. He was very sweet and nice, quite normal, and did not mention the *News of the World*. I signed calendars, had one drink after another, until I was pretty merry. People just kept filling up my glass. At one point a man came up to me and said: 'Do you remember me, Tula?' I didn't. He was obviously an outsider, perhaps a friend of one of the people working on the calendar, and I thought he'd be bound to mention something. But he said: 'I remember you when you were the Painted Lady. I wanted you to sign a poster but you were in such demand I never got a chance. Will you sign a calendar?'

I thought: God, if you remember me from so long ago, you must have picked up the story in the *News of the World*. But obviously he hadn't.

I reeled back home that evening, thankful that everything had gone so well, and the next day my Mum and I set off for Italy.

We had a very quiet and peaceful week. My Mum had been working hard and I was completely exhausted from the strain of the last few months, so we saw no late-night shows. We went to the beach every day, soaked up the sun, ate well and slept early. It was a very relaxing week and it gave me time to think, and to discuss my position with my

Mum. I tried to assess what my future held for me, whether my career as a model was finished.

I'd made a good reputation; I was doing much better work than when I'd first started; I felt I was on the brink of landing what every model dreams about – a long contract. But the *News of the World* article could wreck all that. All it would need would be for someone to produce the cutting – 'Tula The Sex Change Model' – and, if I hadn't sued the paper and won, that would be that.

I began to think that if I came clean, told my own story in my own way, at least it would end the uncertainty. I could tell the truth and see what happened. There was no point in covering up any more. When I talked to my Dad about it, he agreed.

There were other reasons why I decided that I should tell my story. If I told it, at least it would be the truth: various friends had been sending me clippings from foreign magazines and they were full of inaccuracies. An Italian magazine had run some beautiful pictures from the set of the James Bond film, and, opposite, a shot of a group of schoolboys, one of whom was supposed to be me. We discovered that the picture had been taken at the village school five years before I went there and the boy who was supposed to be me was actually some other local guy. In a New York paper they said that my sister had started modelling before me, which was untrue. Another magazine had said that an Italian boyfriend had paid for me to have the operation, which cost £1,500. I had worked hard to pay for it myself.

So far I had not talked to anyone, hadn't confirmed or denied any of the story. I thought that if I made one statement, in the form of a book, it would end all the speculation and gossip and people could leave me alone.

In my personal life I think I have been very lucky in my

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relationships. I have known some beautiful men, who've been kind to me and spoilt me. But always there was something missing on my side. Analysing this missing factor, after the *News of the World* story, I realized that I had always had a skeleton in my cupboard, that the secret I had kept, that I had once been a boy, blocked relationships from developing into total love and commitment. But if I wrote the book, took the skeleton out of the cupboard, then any relationship that began after publication would, perhaps, stand a chance. At least there could be no secrets.

Finally, all the press articles I have read about myself suggest that I have been conning the world; but I don't feel that I have. I am a woman, and I am a model. Looking back, I know that I was always a woman. My problem was that I was born a boy.

Chapter Two

I was born Barry Cossey in a little village called Brooke, in Norfolk, which is about seven miles from Norwich.

Brooke is a typical picture postcard English village, very small, simple, and beautiful. For three consecutive years it won the competition for the most beautiful village in Norfolk.

My father is a very strong man. His star sign is Taurus and he's a typical bull. What he says goes; we don't argue with him, just love and respect him. Ever since I can remember he has worked for the local bus company in Norwich as a coachbuilder.

My Mum is tall – five feet ten inches – beautiful, and loving. She always wanted to be a model, but Norwich, where she was brought up, wasn't the place to start up a modelling career. She led a very sheltered life: she had never been abroad before I took her for the first time, two years ago.

I could always confide in my Mum and she would always cover up for me. If she found out that I'd played truant from school, or had broken something, she would keep it

from my Dad. We had that kind of relationship -- I wasn't frightened of her -- which I think is lovely.

I was a troublesome baby, always crying and clinging to my mother, never wanting to leave her, always wanting to be at her side. My mother never had any trouble with my elder brother, Terry, but I was always a problem. The first day she took me to school I screamed the place down, and the teacher had to hold me down as I fought to escape and get back to my mother.

From the start I hated school. I went a year before my younger sister, Pam, and all I can remember of that first year is a sense of endless loneliness. When Pam joined me at the school things weren't so bad but even so, my only real memory of that time is a strong feeling of unhappiness. My clear memories of school begin in the upper class, when I must have been about nine. Opposite the village school was the blacksmith's shop which was owned by Dad's brother. My Grandmother lived there too and my Mum would often visit her. During break I would see her bicycle leaning against the wall and once we were back in the classroom I'd ask to go to the toilet, then make a run for it, and go to see my Mum. Often I used to run home to see her and she became more and more worried and annoyed, and had to be very firm with me. It got to the stage where I would run home and hide even from my Mum, because I couldn't bear being told off by her. Once, our neighbour spotted me squatting among the beans at the bottom of our garden. When Mum came home from her job at the village shop, for lunch, the neighbour asked her: 'Isn't Barry well today?' and told her I was hiding out in the beans. Mum hauled me out of the beans and took me back to school. The Headmaster was very

on the table, miming to them. Pam would wrap a long, black scarf round her head to imitate a beehive hairdo and I had a brown scarf which I tied up to look like a Helen Shapiro hairdo. These games were a deadly secret between us, and Pam never told Mum. She only found out because once we took a stupid risk. We ran down the road, screaming, dressed in coats and high-heeled shoes, and a neighbour spotted us and told Mum. She was annoyed that we'd been using her stuff, but she didn't take it seriously. We told her we had been larking about and she didn't tell Dad. She had no idea that we spent most of our time dressing up.

At school I continued to play truant. Our house was about half a mile from the main road where the school bus stopped to pick up the village children, and Pam and I had to walk down the lane to the bus stop. Many times I left the house late, on purpose, so that I 'missed the bus', and could go home again and play about with my mother's dresses. Coming home from school at night was often a terrifying experience. The other boys from the village thought I was a snob as well as a pansy and enjoyed beating me up in the dark lane between the bus stop and our house. I took to stealing things from the house – cigarette cards, coins, stamps – which I'd give to the village ruffians to keep on the good side of them.

My first memory of sexual feeling concerns a local boy called Ben. I must have been about thirteen. One evening Pam and I were walking our dog in the fields when we met Ben, who was walking his dog. Ben was four or five years older than us but we began chatting and sat down. After a while, Ben exposed himself to us. Pam was shocked and ran away, but I was curious and intrigued and wanted to stay. I did stay. I didn't touch him, I just watched as he

played with himself. I found it very interesting. I had never seen anything like it and I was excited and puzzled. It was the first time I had experienced any sexual feeling or arousal – but it was towards another boy, which surprised and disturbed me. Obviously I knew it was wrong because I didn't discuss it with anyone, but kept it to myself. I couldn't understand my feelings.

The irony was that, at this time, I began to have girlfriends, friends of Pam whom I would take out in the evenings. I liked their company and they liked me because I was so good-looking. I had become a very tall, very pretty boy. At school we were having sex instruction and I had my first experience with a girl.

It happened one afternoon. Mum and Dad were out and I had taken the girl up to my bedroom to play 'doctors and nurses'. After the sex lessons at school I was curious, and so was she. She wanted to see what I had and I wanted to see what she had. I made love to her, but all the time I was thinking of Ben. It wasn't as enjoyable as I thought it should have been, it just wasn't exciting and I couldn't understand why. But it was all very tender and nice. I don't think the girl had a climax because I certainly didn't – it was all very innocent and young – and disappointing.

At school I began to be aware of the other boys. In the changing-room, before gym, I'd look at their bodies. They were mostly the same age as me but seemed more masculine and rugged. They were growing hair on their legs and pubic hair and I wasn't. It embarrassed me that I was so smooth and I was determined to make the few hairs on my legs grow. I thought I could do this by shaving them. I stole my Dad's razor and started to shave a leg but I didn't know how the razor worked and didn't tighten the blade,

and gave myself a long cut right down my leg. I still have the scar!

As time went on, I began to be obsessed by hair – hair on legs, hair under arms, pubic hair. I couldn't tell anyone about it; I was ashamed of my feelings. The gym master, for instance, was extremely good-looking, very masculine, and with wonderfully hairy legs. When he wore his shorts I would stare at his legs. He also had a hairy chest which fascinated me. I had a great desire to touch him and caress him. I was also becoming more aware of myself. I liked the idea that the teachers might be looking at me and admiring my slim, smooth legs. I also began to think about my breasts.

Pam was a slow developer. Most of her class were already developing a bust, but she was still flat. I remember looking at myself in mirrors and hoping that I would develop, like Pam's friends.

At school, I liked gym – the horse, the wall-bars, the trampoline – but I hated football. As often as I could get away with it I would pretend to have lost some vital article of kit to get out of playing. When I did have to play it was always horrible. If the ball came in my direction the boys on my side would scream: 'Come on, Cossey, kick the ball. Kick the ball, sissy.' When I did have the ball, the boys on the opposing team would tackle me and kick me hard in the shins. The few times I did actually kick the ball I always did it wrong, with my toe, and the teachers would yell at me. I hated it.

Pam played hockey, which she enjoyed; and I enjoyed watching the girls play hockey. It struck me that girls had all the nice games to play – hockey, tennis, netball – and boys had all the hard, nasty games. I used to dream about playing hockey and netball.

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I could only enjoy simple things, that didn't involve aggression, like art and craft and music. I loved gardening. We each had a small plot to tend and it was fun. What I really longed to be able to do was cookery classes.

My brother, Terry, was completely unlike me. He was five years older and very much a man. He loved football! I know that my Dad felt there was something odd about me. He had no idea about the dressing up, of course, and I didn't discuss my feelings with him, and I think he felt I was a bit of a softy, and hadn't come out of my shell. He encouraged Terry to try to toughen me up a bit and Terry would drag me into the garden for a friendly rough-house. He tried to teach me boxing and often knocked me about so hard I would end up crying. We got on well, but there was never the closeness there should have been between brothers. My sister was the only one I felt close to at that time.

By my last year at school my behaviour was getting pretty outrageous. I grew my hair very long and the other boys used to tease me about it, but it didn't bother me too much. I was trying to imitate the Barry Ryan look – long on top and brushed back – but my hair was straight and it didn't work. So I put a couple of rollers in, at night, to make it stand up at the back. They were doll's rollers, not proper ones, and the effect must have looked very strange.

Pam was beginning to put makeup on in the mornings – and was always getting told off about it – and I began to copy her. I'd put a little bit of mascara on my eyelashes, and on my eyebrows, to darken them up. Nobody seemed to notice until one day I had a fright. The music teacher was a very nice lady, rather like my Mum, sweet and never aggressive, and she seemed to like me for some reason. One day she remarked that my eyes were very dark. 'You've

got beautiful eyes,' she said. I was terrified that she would rub my eyebrows with her thumb. I felt caught. But she didn't, and after that I toned down the mascara.

As I watched Pam develop I kept hoping that I would develop too, looking at my breasts and willing them to grow. I convinced myself that they were growing: my nipples were much bigger than the other boys', rounder and fuller, and they were highly sensitive. I would fill the top pocket of my school jacket with pens and pencils and erasers to give myself the bustified look the girls had.

At about this time I started a Saturday job which my Dad encouraged. I worked at the local butcher, scraping down the wooden meat-block, sweeping the floor, cleaning the counters and trays, stacking sausages in the freezer. I was in my last term at school and I had no idea what I wanted to do, but Dad was keen for me to go full-time at the butcher's. I suppose he thought it might make me more manly.

One morning, in class, the Careers Officer arrived to interview us and ask us what we had in mind for jobs. One boy said he wanted to be a policeman, another that he wanted to join the Merchant Navy. When he asked me what I intended to do I told him about the Saturday job and said I quite fancied becoming a butcher.

'Cossey - a butcher!' he said, with a look and the whole class fell about. I suppose they thought I'd become a hairdresser or something.

In July 1969, a month before my fifteenth birthday, I left school and went full-time to the butcher's. My job now included cutting up pigs' heads to make sausages and all the other dirty jobs an apprentice has to do. I had to have various knives, which were expensive, and the cost of them

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was deducted from my wage-pocket, so I felt I was working for nothing. I hated the job anyway – it was filthy and exhausting – and I began to look around for something else.

Chapter Three

There was a job at a boutique in Norwich being advertised in the local paper. I went along for an interview and they obviously liked the look of me because they took me on straight away.

The shop did not just sell trendy clothes but working men's gear as well – overalls and wellington boots. I worked hard, got all the shelves tidied up and sorted out, and found that I enjoyed serving customers and got on well with most of them. The rest of the staff were much older than me and they talked openly and freely about all sorts of things that were a mystery to me, but fascinated me. One thing that particularly intrigued me was a pub they kept mentioning that was a gay pub. I had never met a gay person, my family never discussed homosexuals or homosexuality. Only once had my father said something about it. There was a character, a sort of local legend, a man who lived in the next village and was said to be 'a dirty old man'. My father had warned me about him, telling me that I should never speak to him or go near him. In fact I never saw him, though I did think of him with great curiosity.

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After a few months at the main shop I was transferred to a smaller branch in a quieter part of the town, which specialized in army surplus. There was another boy there, but he didn't seem to be much good and I was told it was up to me to run the shop. I was given the keys and, at the end of each day, I tilled up and took the money down to the main branch. It was quite a responsibility for a fifteen-year-old who'd only been working for six months, but I loved it.

The new shop was not very far from the pub I'd heard the others talk about. It was a quaint little pub, by a bridge, and for several weeks I walked past it from time to time. I hardly ever saw anyone going in or out, there didn't seem to be much life, but I was certain it was *the* pub. One lunchtime I plucked up enough courage to go in.

It was a nice little place with lots of brass bits and pieces hanging on the walls. Behind the bar were framed photographs of celebrities, signed and dedicated to someone called Billy. Billy was the landlady. She treated me in rather an abrupt way, very cool, but friendly. The place was almost empty; there were just a couple of guys drinking and they didn't look outrageously feminine. In fact they looked like straight sort of fellows. It was quite a surprise. They didn't look the sort of people who shared the feelings I had.

I began to go to the pub regularly and one day, at lunchtime, I met Adrian.

Adrian was a couple of years older than me but in almost every way he was just like me: tall and very pretty. We got chatting, found that we had feelings and ideas in common, and our friendship built up from there. We started meeting for lunch and then began to get together in the evenings. Adrian had a car and would pick me up at the top of the

lane near our house, where I used to get the school bus, but without my Mum and Dad knowing anything about it. We'd go to the cinema, or for a meal, and do girly things together. We were like girlfriends rather than mates, and it was really great. Whenever I left home to meet Adrian I would be neat and tidy and looking normal. But the minute I got in the car I'd put on mascara, some rouge on my cheeks, and lip-gloss. Usually we'd go to the gay pub for a drink and then to a restaurant where we'd just sit and look at beautiful men, and talk about them, but never anything more than that. We never tried to meet anyone.

Although Adrian and I got on very well, we were different in some ways. Adrian never wore makeup and couldn't understand why I did. He was a very pretty boy, but pretty in a boyish way, whereas I was pretty in a girlish way. I enjoyed the idea of going to a gay pub looking like a girl; I thought it was the right thing to do. But Adrian told me that if I looked too much like a girl I would never meet anyone in the gay scene as they didn't like girlish boys. I ignored his advice and continued with my makeup.

Adrian had met a few people in the Norwich gay scene. It was a very closed world, almost a secret world, and the big night was Saturday night, when there was usually a party. Eventually both Adrian and I were invited to one of these parties.

I dressed carefully for my 'debut', in tight, white trousers and a tight, multi-coloured tee-shirt. When my Dad saw me he was furious.

'You're not going out like that,' he said. 'You look like a poof.'

'Don't be stupid,' I said. 'This is the fashion. Everyone's wearing this sort of gear.'

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He seemed to accept it, reckoning, I suppose, that since I worked in a boutique, I knew what was fashionable.

Adrian met me at the top of the lane and I put on my makeup. The party was in a huge house on the outskirts of Norwich.

The house was set in spectacular grounds, with tiered gardens, and inside it was amazing – a blaze of crystal chandeliers. In one room there were men dancing together and, in another, a table loaded with drinks and food, where people were sitting around and chatting. I'd never seen anything like it in my life.

Adrian introduced me to a friend of his called David. David was shorter than me and, like Adrian, pretty in a boyish way. He came from Norwich but had moved to London and only came home for weekends and holidays. There were lots of other boys at the party and I felt that they didn't like me. They were jealous, in the way that girls are jealous, because several people had commented on how pretty I was. I danced with a couple of guys and it was incredible, almost too much to comprehend.

The people were of all types, from a high camp busdriver, called 'Peggy', to faces I recognized from the local TV station, hairdressers, shop assistants, and a couple of very strange-looking women. The host, Neville, was an extremely well-dressed man who owned a chain of businesses in Norwich. His clothes were Italian and expensive – silk shirt open at the collar, immaculate suit – and it was obvious that he was rich. We started talking and found we got on very well. We became great friends; he was a sort of mother/father to me, very sweet and kind. He never tried anything on with me, though; it was a strange sort of relationship we had. He didn't like the gay scene very much – I don't know why – but

he enjoyed taking me out in the evening. He looked completely straight himself, masculine, although he was too immaculate, too finished, to be taken as completely straight, and we used to go to straight pubs. One night he introduced me to a friend of his called Alan.

Alan was married and he couldn't believe that I was a boy. He said I was the prettiest thing he'd ever seen. We struck up a friendship that night which developed into a relationship. He told me that he had always wanted to try going to bed with a boy, and had always wondered if there was a side of him which was homosexual. I began to see more and more of Alan. He'd take me to straight places, discos, pubs, and after-hours drinking places. I was wearing more and more makeup and Alan didn't mind because he wanted people to think that I was a girl – he'd thought I was a girl himself when he'd first seen me. After a time we both felt it was right to try to have sex. He asked me to spend a weekend with him in his caravan, down at the coast, and I agreed. It was my first love and I suppose I read more into it than he did. He was just intensely curious: he thought I was very beautiful and he wanted to see what I was like naked.

I enjoyed that first experience of sex with a man. We caressed, and kissed, and cuddled, and it excited and satisfied me. He wanted to turn me over and go further but it was not what I wanted. Kissing was enough for me – it really turned me on.

After that weekend our relationship faded rapidly. Alan didn't want to know me any more. I was hurt and disappointed and couldn't understand what had gone wrong. I knew that, in homosexual relationships, there was an active and a passive partner but I couldn't bring myself to perform the passive role. I wanted Alan to lie on top of

me and kiss me and cuddle me as he would kiss and cuddle a girl. I wasn't interested in the sort of anal intercourse that he was so curious about and I could not satisfy him in any other way, as girls satisfied him in the heterosexual relationships he was used to.

Looking back, I see that my failure with Alan was one of the first signs that directed me on to the road of becoming a girl. I was turned on by men, yet I could not function properly in a homosexual relationship with a man: obviously there was only one course for me to follow. I did not see this at the time. I was still keen to explore the gay world and meet more people.

Neville had promised that he would take me to London one day and I kept pestering him. He finally agreed. I told my parents that I was staying in Norwich for the weekend with a girlfriend and spent Saturday night at Neville's house. On Sunday morning, very early, we drove to London. Neville had a flat in Ladbroke Grove and we stopped there for a late breakfast and to give me a chance to tart myself up. Then we went off to a pub in Victoria.

It was absolutely amazing. There were two pubs, both gay pubs, close together in a sort of back street. The pubs were so crowded that the people were flowing out into the street, talking and laughing. There were male models and some very famous faces and nobody seemed to care. It was completely different to the scene in Norwich, where everything was secret, behind closed doors. Here, nobody seemed to mind who saw them, or what people thought. They were free to behave as they liked.

I had a great time. I was chatted up by lots of different people and asked out to drinks and dinner. I couldn't accept any of the invitations because I had to be back in Norwich

that evening. Neville and I left after closing time and drove back to East Anglia.

I had only spent a few hours in London – but it had been a revelation.

By now I was getting extremely worried about myself and my feelings and I longed to talk about it all to someone in the family, but was, of course, too frightened to do so. In the end, surprisingly, it was my brother Terry I talked to.

For some time my Dad had been going on at me because Terry and I didn't seem to get on. He felt that, as brothers, we should be friends. It wasn't that I didn't love my brother – I did – it was just that we were so different. We didn't click socially. However, we decided to try to build a brotherly friendship and started going out together regularly on Tuesdays, to a pub or the bowling-alley.

Terry's favourite pub was a place that was good for picking up girls.

Terry would eye up a girl and say: 'She's nice. What do you think of her?'

It was difficult for me. I wasn't interested in any of the girls and I felt that Terry sensed it, and that I should come out straight and talk to him about it.

Things came to a head one night when we went bowling with one of Terry's friends from the bank where he was now working. The friend was incredibly handsome and bowled me over. He must have been aware of my admiration because he gave me some very strange looks. I was suddenly intensely selfconscious. I realized how I must have appeared to Terry's friend, as a pretty boy. I was amazed that Terry himself had never seen it: but if you grow up with someone you often don't see him as an outsider does, you just accept him.

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Terry and I were so much closer, as a result of our regular outings, that I felt I could tell him about my feelings and problems and so I did.

He was amazingly sympathetic, loving, and sensitive. He told me not to worry. He told me that most boys go through a homosexual phase and come out of it.

'It's a bit more than that with me,' I said. 'I've actually experienced it.'

I told him the whole saga of Alan.

It freaked him out but he still thought I'd grow out of it and that I shouldn't say anything to Dad.

I was seeing more and more of David, the boy I had met at Neville's party. I envied his London life and was always pestering him to tell me about his experiences, when he came up for weekends. His parents had no idea what sort of life he was leading – he kept secrets from them as I kept secrets from mine – but the difference was that he was in London, where he could do what he liked, and I was living at home, in constant fear that my Dad would find out, or insist that I cut my hair. I began to think more and more about leaving home and going to London. I wanted to grow my hair, wear makeup, live my own life.

At work I developed two personalities. If I was serving a man, or if I thought anyone from the management was watching me, I'd put on what I thought was a manly, butch act. But if nobody was watching me, I'd serve as a woman and act naturally. Many of the women customers thought I was a girl. They would call me 'Miss' and would be quite happy to let me measure them and help them change.

One afternoon I was walking to the main branch, after closing-time, to deliver the day's takings, when 'Peggy', the busdriver I had met at Neville's party, came whizzing past at the wheel of his bus. 'Peggy' was a big, butch-

looking man, but he had a high-pitched, supercamp voice. He slowed the bus right down and yelled out of the window at me: 'Hello, daughter!'

I laughed and waved but then I saw the amazed faces of the people in the bus, staring at me, as 'Peggy' cracked jokes, and shrieked, and carried on. I suddenly thought: My God, some of those people could be from Brooke, they could know me. Neville had warned me not to get involved with 'Peggy': he was just too outrageous and obvious.

A few months later I had a much bigger fright.

I had been out with Adrian, but as his car was being serviced, had to get home by bus. I missed the last bus and was forced to hitch-hike the seven miles to Brooke. I was picked up by a man, a big, rugged fellow who was obviously straight and who had probably stopped for me because he thought I was a girl. We got talking – quite a pleasant, interesting conversation – and just short of my village he pulled off the lane, into the entrance to a field, saying he had to relieve himself. It was pitch dark and very quiet. When he got back into the car, I saw that he had not zipped himself up. He began telling me how his wife was in hospital, having a baby, how he had always had homosexual feelings, but had never had sex with a guy. We were talking, quite openly, when suddenly there was a knock on the window and a dazzling beam from a torch. We both froze.

It was one of the local policemen. He told the driver to get out of the car, asked him where he was from, and what was going on. Then he questioned me. I told him I was from Brooke and he flashed the torch in my face and said: 'Oh yes, I know you.'

I was petrified. The policeman obviously thought we

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had been doing what we probably would have done if we hadn't been interrupted, but both of us swore we had just been talking. In the end the policeman let the driver go, having written down his name, then he said he would take me home and see my father.

I pleaded with him. I told him it was not what he thought, that we'd only talked, that it would never happen again and that I had a girlfriend. I told him that my father would kill me if he found out. In the end he agreed to take me home but not speak to my father. He told me to go and see him at the station the following night. I went to see him the next evening and he gave me a stern warning. I think I managed to convince him that nothing had happened and he said he'd let the matter drop.

I was terribly frightened and I decided that I had just got to get away, leave home. That night I told my Dad that I had decided to go to London. I had met someone through a mate at work who'd told me that jobs were easy to find in London, and that there were more opportunities. My Mum was very upset. She didn't want me to go and couldn't understand why I wanted to leave home. I told her it was a challenge, something I had to do. It took a good two months to convince them both. I was under age and my Dad could have forbidden it.

On the weekend I left, my Dad gave me some advice. 'If you find you don't like it,' he said, 'for God's sake come home. If you're that crazy about London, I suppose you'll have to get it out of your system. I can't see that there's anything happening in London that isn't happening here – but you're obviously set on it.'

I think he felt that if he stopped me I would be unhappy anyway, and that he didn't have the right to stand in my way.

Tula

I didn't know what I was going to do once I'd left home, but I knew I had to have my freedom, to live without fear of being an embarrassment to my family.

And so one Saturday morning I bought a one-way train ticket to London.

Chapter Four

David met me at the station and took me to a tiny flat in Ravenscourt Park, near Shepherd's Bush, which he'd arranged for me. David lived three or four doors down the same street in a similar flat.

It was a pretty little tree-lined street of small terraced houses. The house where I lived belonged to an odd old couple who had the ground floor; I had a bedroom upstairs and a kitchenette where I could cook – not that I was much good at cooking in those days.

I had arrived with about £50 in my pocket, £25 from an insurance policy my Dad had taken out, which matured when I left school, and £25 I had saved. I realized that £50 wouldn't last very long in London and immediately set about looking for a job. In the local paper I saw an ad for a job in a delicatessen in Goldhawk Road. I liked the idea of a shop, and serving customers, so I applied and got the job. I worked behind the cheese counter. They taught me how to cut slices from a whole cheese, how to cut smoked salmon, and how to make the counter look attractive. The majority of the customers were women and I got on with

them very well: they thought I was such a pretty-looking boy.

For the first time in my life I felt truly independent and it was a great feeling. I had my own job, my own flat, I was miles from home: I could do what I liked. With David as my guide I began to explore the gay pubs, gay discos and clubs of London. At first I was shocked and amazed. I had never realized that there were places where men could dance with each other in public. But I was not very successful in meeting people and forming friendships. David told me that it was my long hair and makeup.

'You should cut your hair and lay off the makeup,' he said. 'People are interested in *boys*, not girls.'

My salary was £15 a week and my rent £8, and I found I did not have enough money to manage on. David and I decided to find a place we could share. We found a bedsitter in Fulham, for £10 a week, and moved in together. Our room was at the top of a big house. The house was split up into bedsits, owned by an Irish landlord. It was in this house that I met someone who was to play an important role in my life.

Her name was Polly. She was petite and pretty and we met over the gas meter in the communal bathroom. I was having difficulty getting a sixpence in the meter and she helped me out and showed me how to do it. A few days later a couple of friends came round to see David and myself and Polly happened to open the door to them. One of them recognized her and told me that she was not a woman but a man. Her name was Ronald and she was a drag artist. I was fascinated and went out of my way to get to know Polly. We began to go out together in the evening to certain clubs that were not exactly gay clubs but where they had drag cabaret. I wore hot-pants and a tee-shirt and

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passed as a girl; Polly wore full drag. Then one day Polly suggested that we should go to a drag ball. She lent me clothes, a wig, the full works, and we went.

I had never experienced anything like it. There was an enormous ballroom full of fantastic drag queens in huge hats. The theme of the ball was 'The Butterfly Ball' and there was a competition for the best-dressed drag – all totally over the top as far as I was concerned. Of course, I did not have enough confidence to enter the competition. There was an air of comedy about the whole affair but both Polly and I felt serious about being dressed as women. I had had to think up a girl's name for myself on the spur of the moment and came up with 'Caroline'. As the evening went on I began to think of myself as Caroline.

Going about with Polly I began to learn about the restrictions and the dangers of appearing in public in drag. There were very few gay places that would allow us in, dressed as women. They just didn't want to know us. There was one club in Covent Garden, basically gay but with a more mixed clientele, where they did let us in. One night, when we were in this club, two straight-looking men appeared. One of them asked me for a dance, but I said that I was tired and hot from dancing all evening. Out of the corner of my eye I could see the manager, who was standing at the top of the stairs, gesturing at us urgently. I gave Polly a nudge and we went into the toilet. The manager came in, in a panic, and told us the two men were plain-clothes police. They had questioned the manager about us and he'd covered up for us and told them that we were girls. I didn't understand what was going on but the manager seemed genuinely worried. He told us we'd have to leave by the back door as the police might be waiting outside to arrest us for female impersonation. He phoned

for a car to pick us up and we slipped out of the back door, into the car, like fugitives.

I decided that I would have to give up my job at the delicatessen. I had to work long hours – from 8am to 8pm on Wednesdays and Fridays – I was on my feet all the time, and I was spending a fortune on travelling. I wanted to get into something like hairdressing, or beautician's work. There was a job being advertised at a salon in Victoria. I applied and they took me on. The starting money was pretty terrible, and I had to serve an apprenticeship, doing the shampooing, watching the qualified hairdressers, but the place specialized in things like Slendertone, massage, and electrolysis, which interested me, and I thought the long-term prospects were excellent. I found that, even with tips, I was only making £12 a week and so I was forced to get an evening job with a catering company, selling ice-creams at theatres. I also sold programmes and ushered people to their seats, which was more fun and sometimes lucrative. Foreigners would often tip me, since the custom on the continent is to tip ushers and usherettes. To earn more money I also cheated on the sales of ice-cream and soft drink (everybody did), adding a few extra pennies to the price.

I needed all the money I could get because I was beginning to spend more and more on clothes, shoes, and makeup. Drag, I found, was an expensive business. The first high-heeled shoes I bought were a black pair I saw in a shop. I tried them on, they fitted perfectly, I thought black would go with anything, so I bought them. When I got them home and looked inside at the label I found they were a make called 'Go Gay'. I took to high heels like a duck to water. I thought it would be a problem to walk with high heels but it wasn't. Unisex fashions were coming

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in at the time so I didn't have to wear a dress to look like a woman. I bought shorts, and tight jeans, and blousy tee-shirts, but I found all the makeup – foundation, lipstick, eye shadow – very expensive. But I enjoyed buying it. I loved going into little chemists and choosing different colours and brands.

In the evenings, I was dressing more and more as a girl but at this stage I had no idea that it was possible to go further. And then, one night, Polly gave a party.

She invited the usual crowd of drag queens but one in particular, whom I'd never seen before, riveted my attention. She had a plunging neckline and magnificent boobs that looked completely real. I couldn't understand it. I couldn't quite bring myself to ask her whether they were real – it seemed too personal a question – but a few days later she came out with us and I got to know her better. She looked amazing that night and I realized that the breasts must be real. I asked her. She told me that she was taking hormone tablets to develop her breasts, and told me the name and address of the doctor who was prescribing them.

That night I lay in my room, unable to sleep, with only one thought in my mind: 'Oh God, I want boobs. I want boobs.'

I worked out that my female hormone content must be extremely high anyway since I looked and felt the way I did, completely relaxed in girl's clothes and happy being dressed as a girl. My nipples had always been large and sensitive – most boys have very little feeling in their nipples – but obviously my breasts were not going to develop on their own, otherwise they would already have done so. The idea of taking something to make them grow excited me tremendously.

I made an appointment to see the doctor whose name Polly's friend had given me. I made a big effort to look as lovely as possible. I set my hair, put rollers in to make it bouncy. I put on mascara and lipstick and dressed in a pair of slacks, a tee-shirt, and a half-cup bra, padded out.

The consulting-room was in the Edgware Road and the doctor turned out to be a little old man, very sweet and sympathetic. I explained to him how I loved dressing as a girl and really felt confident only when dressed as a woman. He asked me question after question about my sexual feelings, especially about homosexual relationships. I told him exactly how I felt: that I was attracted to men, but to the more heterosexual type of man, not the gay, feminine type; that I had tried anal intercourse but that I found it painful and a complete turn-off. During the interview I did one particularly feminine thing: I lied about my age. I told the doctor I was twenty, when, in fact, I was only about seventeen. I was terribly anxious that he should think of me as a sensible and mature person who knew what he wanted. I was afraid, if he knew how young I really was, that he'd tell me to go away and think again, ask my parents' advice. But he didn't. He wrote me out a prescription for hormone tablets.

He explained that these would develop my breasts but that, if I wanted to, I could go further, I could have a complete sex-change operation. The minute he said it I knew instantly the direction my life must take. As he talked on, telling me that it would not be an easy path to take, I sat in the chair and saw my whole future cut and dried. I saw a way of finally belonging.

I was reasonably happy in my job; meeting Polly's drag friends had made me realize that I wasn't a freak, that there were other people with the same problems and feelings as

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mine; yet I had never felt that I fitted in to society. In fact I had come increasingly to feel that I was an embarrassment to society. I wasn't welcome in the gay world, and I didn't like the gay world. My sexual life was frustrated and unsatisfactory. I was constantly worried about breaking the law by appearing in public dressed as a girl.

Now I saw the solution to all my difficulties. I could become what I had always felt I was at heart.

From the doctor's surgery I went straight to the nearest chemist and got the hormone tablets. I took two. I was in such a state of excitement that when I woke next morning I dashed to a mirror to see if my breasts had grown during the night! The tablets made me sick – I would often vomit in the morning – but I didn't care. The thought that the tablets were starting the process of turning me into a woman was so wonderful.

Throughout this period, before I began taking the pills, I had been going up to Norfolk to see my parents once every three months or so. Although my hair was too long for my father's taste I would make an effort to look smart and manly and put on an act. I couldn't discuss anything with them any more. Then my brother, Terry, rang to say he had a few days' holiday and was coming to London, and asked if he could stay with me. By this time I was no longer sharing with David. David had come increasingly to disapprove of the life I was leading. He hated the drag and the makeup and couldn't understand why I wanted to look like a girl all the time. He had finally moved out.

I decided to let Terry see me as I was. He already knew that I hadn't 'grown out' of the feelings we'd discussed before and he'd seemed to accept it. Now I thought I would tell him exactly what my life was, that I was taking the tablets, and intended eventually to have a sex-change. So I

dolled myself up exactly as I had for the interview with the doctor, and waited for him to arrive.

When he saw me he was shocked, but shocked in a pleasant sort of way. He said: 'You look amazing. Absolutely amazing.' I told him everything and he said: 'You do look like a girl, you really do.'

I asked him how on earth I could break it to Dad and he said that when he got home he would do it for me. He did. He told Mum and Dad what I looked like and what I was doing. My Dad rang me up. He was absolutely appalled. He took the attitude any father would take.

'What the hell are you doing with your life?' he said. 'What are you getting yourself into?'

I tried to explain over the phone, describing my feelings and needs, telling him about the doctor and the tablets. I poured out my heart to him but he couldn't really take it in.

'Pull yourself together, get your hair cut, and put a suit on,' he said.

His attitude made me angry. I was too young to realize that it was just the initial shock, that it was natural and normal, and that, being the man he was, my father would calm down in time, and begin to understand. This is exactly what happened. Once he had had time to think it all over, he completely changed his attitude, and was prepared to support and help me. But it was too late for me. I had decided to cut myself off completely from my family. I thought: I'll show them. I'll work, I'll earn the money for the operation, I'll have it, and then I'll confront them. For a long time afterwards I kept in touch only through the odd letter. I never phoned them and I never went home. Even when I wrote I told them nothing about how I was progressing. I assumed that they didn't want to

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know. In the light of the marvellous support they have given me, I feel deeply ashamed of the attitude I took. But I was young and headstrong and all I could think about was myself and my operation. I completely underestimated the love my parents had for me.

Meanwhile, I was still working in the evenings at various theatres. I was at the Shaftesbury, during the run of *Hair*, and the box-office manager always called me 'Myra' after Myra Breckenbridge. I discussed my hopes and ambitions with all the catering staff quite openly and they were sympathetic and understanding. I was in the bar one evening, with a tray of ice-creams round my neck, when I was aware of a man looking at me. I was told he was a choreographer called David Toguri, a friend of the director of *Hair*. He came up to me and started chatting and then suddenly said: 'Have you ever thought of becoming a showgirl?'

I was completely stunned, taken aback.

'But I'm a boy!' I blurted out.

'I don't care what you are,' he said, 'you're the most stunning thing I've ever seen.'

I found myself blushing and stammering something and he said: 'If the idea appeals, come and talk to me about it. I know all about you, what you want to do. It doesn't make any difference. You're a beautiful creature.'

For a moment I couldn't take it in. It was the sort of opportunity you dream about but which never happens in reality. The thought of working, earning a living, as a girl – and in show business – was incredibly exciting.

I couldn't sleep that night. I couldn't wait to tell Polly. She and I were sharing a place together at this time.

David Toguri contacted me again and told me to come to a casting in a week's time. I asked what on earth I was

supposed to wear? Should I put a wig on, or what? He said: 'Just come looking as you do now, but wear a bikini.' I said: 'What about makeup?' and he replied: 'Wear exactly what you've got on now.' This made me laugh as I was supposed to be a boy! Obviously I'd overdone it.

I had a week to organize myself. I had a bikini but I wanted to arrive at the casting in something stunning, so I got a new outfit together – a lilac dress in a soft material.

The great day came.

I put curlers in my hair and put on a bit more makeup than usual. I arrived at the rehearsal studios to find half a dozen other girls, all getting changed. We didn't talk to each other – we were all far too nervous. In the background I could hear music and voices. David came in and told me it was my turn. He showed me on to a stage and I heard him announce: 'This is Caroline.'

There were bright lights and faces staring at me from the auditorium. David made me walk back and forth, with one hand on my hip, and one held out, in true showgirl style, then he showed me some simple dance steps. I couldn't follow the steps at all. I felt stupid and clumsy. I was petrified. I couldn't smile. I had no confidence.

A man stepped up on to the stage and introduced himself as the production manager. His name was John. He asked me to take the bra of my bikini off and hold my arms above my head.

'They're not very big,' he said.

I said: 'I know,' and explained that I was doing my best with hormone tablets.

Obviously it had been made clear to the production manager that one of the girls auditioning that day would not be quite what she seemed.

'Well,' John said, 'it doesn't really matter. You look

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amazing – that's the great thing – really amazing.'

'You mean I've got the job?'

He nodded and smiled.

I was excited, but also afraid at the thought of performing in front of an audience in less than a month's time.

Chapter Five

I immediately gave in my notice to the beauty salon and started rehearsing for the show. I had three weeks to learn the routines David wanted and there were times when I thought I would never master the steps. In the meantime I had various other problems to sort out. I went to my doctor and explained that I had landed a job in which I would be employed as a girl. He told me that though I could legally appear on stage as a girl, the minute I left the club I would have to dress as a man. This was obviously impossible — the show was not a drag show — so he gave me a letter confirming that I was undergoing treatment for a sex-change operation from him. At the same time I went to a solicitor in Victoria and changed my name by deed-poll to Caroline Cossey.

The show David was preparing was to go on at a club called the Latin Quarter, a place rather like the Talk of the Town, but on a smaller scale. There was one other showgirl in the show, with whom I was to share a dressing-room, and I dreaded meeting her, as well as the dancers, the singers, and the star. David had told me that Dawn, my

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fellow showgirl, had been told that I was a boy but that she'd said nothing to the others and had decided to let them find out for themselves. The first day of full rehearsals I was almost paralysed with nerves. I felt that every eye was on me. For most of the morning I sat in a dark corner watching the dancers rehearsing the opening routine. Then it was time for me to go through my first routine, with one of the four singers.

David walked me through the routine. He had it all written down on a piece of paper – turn, count, stepball, change – but I got it wrong every time. The other members of the cast were sitting around, enjoying their break, eating snacks and chatting. I felt they were talking about me, laughing at me. I was sure they *knew*. They were all wearing standard rehearsal gear, leotards and tights, and I was in a pair of shorts and a tee-shirt. I was on the verge of tears but David was wonderful. He kept telling me not to worry; I'd get to know the steps; I looked marvellous and that was all that mattered.

I was now earning £30 a week, more than my two previous jobs combined, and I decided to move into a place on my own. I found a room at the top of a house in Wetherby Gardens, off the Gloucester Road. I went to view it dressed as a girl and took it on in the name of Caroline Cossey. It was small but it had its own bathroom and a curtained-off area for cooking at one end. I thought it had potential and, with a coat of paint, would be homely.

With my new name, my new job as a girl, and my new place I realized that I could live for twenty-four hours of the day as a girl and I threw away all my male clothes. I felt liberated at last.

The gruelling rehearsals went on every day and the more David tried to teach me the steps, the more I knew I would

never get it right. I began fittings for costumes. They gave me one beautiful sequined red outfit, with a great red shawl to go round my shoulders, and the usual feathers. Everyone said I looked staggering, and, as the day for the opening approached, David told me not to worry. As long as I was in the right position at the right time nobody would mind, or even notice, if I got some of the steps mixed up. But I knew I was not a trained dancer and I felt sure I would make some dreadful blunder and ruin the number.

Opening night came. My teeth were chattering in my head. I went on stage. All I could see were hundreds of faces staring at me. My memory of that performance is a complete blank. My recollections start again from the moment I came off the stage. David was there and told me I had looked absolutely stunning, it had been a huge success, but that I should try to smile more. I suppose I had been concentrating so hard on what my feet were doing that I had forgotten what my face was doing.

After that first night it was only a matter of time before I mastered the routines and could perform the two shows each night full of confidence and smiles. The show received rave reviews and we played to full houses.

Naturally, while preparing myself for my first stage appearance, one question in particular had occupied my mind; the same question that every reader must be asking, namely, how, dressed only in a skimpy bikini, was I going to conceal my little difference? I tried various methods. I would tuck myself right under and hold everything in with sticking plaster. This gave a good flat effect but it was painful, and if I wanted to go to the toilet I had to peel all the plasters off – agony – and then put on fresh plasters, which got to be expensive. I noticed that most of the girls wore g-strings under their heavy fishnet tights and so I

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decided to make myself one. I used extra strong fabric and the most powerful elastic I could find and made myself a special diamond-shaped g-string that held everything in and under in the most effective way. Of course, it was painful but I was used to wearing very tight underpants – for years my instinct had been to hide what I'd got as much as possible – and I found that the old proverb that you can get used to anything in time is true. The problem of my bust was much easier to solve: I used a padded bra, with what boobs I'd got pushed well up. To achieve a cleavage I taped two folds of skin together with Sellotape under the bra and the effect was really very convincing.

The Latin Quarter was a combination of a theatre, a restaurant, and a club. During the week it was patronized mainly by business types, entertaining clients (or their secretaries), but at weekends we'd get in coachloads of people from outside London, maybe a couple of hundred at a time. One night, I remember, Danny La Rue himself came to see the show and we were introduced to him afterwards. Nobody had told him anything about me and I don't think he suspected! I always thought this was a great tribute to my get-up. Not even the expert could tell.

I got on very well with the two male dancers in the show. They were both gay, and very sweet to me. We'd get together between shows, and laugh and joke in each other's dressing-rooms, and on Fridays, when we got paid, we'd go out for a drink. I got on fine with all the girls too. One by one they found out about me but it didn't seem to make any difference. Before each show we'd split a bottle of wine to get a bit of Dutch courage, then lark about and gossip.

With the two male singers, however, it was a different story. On stage they were fine, but off stage they behaved very coldly and distantly to me. They were friendly with

the girls but I felt they kept me at arm's length. On New Year's Eve we had a special show. We all wore balloons for the finale (Old Lang Syne and a Scottish piper) and then the men in the audience came up on stage and popped the balloons with cigarettes until we were all down to bras and g-strings. All very jolly. Backstage, after the show, there was a party and everyone went around kissing everyone else. When the two singers came into my dressing-room they kissed Dawn and she said: 'You must give Caroline a kiss.' But they didn't want to, and I felt thoroughly awkward.

The rules at the Latin Quarter were strict. Members of the cast were not allowed into the restaurant and bars; there was no fraternizing with the customers. We entered and left by a special stage door. After the show, if I didn't go out for a meal or a drink with some of the girls, I would go home in a taxi. Wardour Street, where the club was situated, was a regular pull-in for taxis. There were always ten or twelve parked there, the drivers drinking coffee at a stall and reading the early editions of the papers. I struck up a friendship with one of the drivers and he began to take me home regularly. I would ask him in and we'd drink coffee and listen to music. It was all perfectly respectable, and very nice, and we began to develop a relationship. Once or twice he tried to go further than a kiss and a cuddle but I always put him off with some excuse – wrong time of the month. I never summoned up enough courage to tell him the truth. One night he said he was terribly tired and asked if he could spend the night. I didn't know what to do. I told him he could get some sleep – but nothing more. He lay down on the bed – it was only a single bed – and went to sleep. I put on a panty-girdle and a dressing gown, wrapped a blanket round me, and went to sleep. When I

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woke in the morning he was gone. But I found that my panty-girdle was almost off and I was, so to speak, hanging out. Obviously, during the night, he had tried something on and discovered the truth. I was terrified and counted my lucky stars he hadn't got violent. I looked for him the next evening but there was no sign of him. I never saw him again.

I became very close to my fellow showgirl, Dawn. We began to see each other in the afternoons and at weekends. She would come to my place and I would go to hers. She treated me exactly like a girlfriend and introduced me to all her friends. She had been a model, and one of her boyfriends was a photographer. She confided in him that I was, in fact, a boy and, out of curiosity, he came to see the show one night. He thought I was amazing and could hardly believe what I was. He asked Dawn if I would be willing to pose for some photographs. The idea was to sell them to a newspaper, then to sell more photographs of me, dressed as a boy, to a rival paper. Naturally I turned the idea down flat; many years later, though, it was to have serious repercussions for me.

Dawn had a very large bust and appeared in the show topless. As a result, she earned more money than I did, and it was my ambition to develop a large enough bust so that I could appear topless as well. I began to take far more hormone pills than was good for me but still my breasts didn't grow quickly enough to persuade John that I could go on topless. There was a new show in preparation and he said that I should wait and see how I was in six months. But I was impatient. I had heard that there was an operation you could have to enlarge the breasts and I was determined to save up enough to have it. The trouble was that it was

expensive – several hundred pounds – and I didn't see how I could ever get so much money together.

I would often meet up with Polly after the show and we would go for a meal and a drink to the Cavendish Hotel which was open from two to six and which was always crammed with bunnies from the Playboy Club, girls from various West End night clubs, gamblers, playboys, and all sorts of strange night people. One morning Polly and I were there when there was quite a stir. A tall, handsome Arab came in, surrounded by a large entourage, including a couple of obvious Scotland Yard detectives, and some pretty girls. There was a great rush and bustle as the waiters pushed tables together to accommodate the party. When our meal was brought to us I asked a waiter who the Arab was and he told me he was a prince. After a time we realized that we were being stared at: we were the only two girls sitting together. The waiter came over and asked us if we would join His Highness for a drink. We went over to the Arab's table and were given glasses of champagne. The Arabs were extremely friendly, and introduced us all round, but the atmosphere was a little strange. The Scotland Yard men gave us stern, hard looks and the girls, obviously jealous, were hostile. I was still in my stage makeup, with long false eyelashes and my hair back-combed in an elaborate Raquel Welch style. Eventually we were asked if we'd like to go back to the Grosvenor House for a party. Polly and I exchanged looks, smiled, and said we'd be delighted. We were game for any new experience.

At the door a fleet of limousines was drawn up. The first car was huge and black and had tinted windows. His Highness stepped into it and invited us to join him. We were aware of black looks from the other girls. There was quite a reception committee waiting for us at the Grosvenor

House. We were led through a maze of corridors to a huge suite of rooms. I had never seen such a plush, luxurious place in my life. There was a party in full swing, with the champagne flowing. His Highness came up to me and said he wanted to introduce me to someone who, he said, would like me very much. I was more than a little sloshed by this time so I agreed. He led me through another maze of corridors, at the back of the building, and eventually to an enormous private apartment, with massive chandeliers, where an old man was sitting in a chair. The old man rose and I was introduced to him. He was the Prince's father. He was dressed in Arab robes, he had a long beard, and, I couldn't help noticing, an enormous gold Rolex watch studded with diamonds. The Prince left us alone together, the old man poured me champagne, and we began to talk. I decided to come clean straight away and tell him about my problem. I didn't think it was likely that he would try anything on - he was too old and frail.

'You are a boy?' he said, pointing, and I explained that I was having hormone treatment and was hoping to have a sex-change operation. The subject seemed to fascinate him. I told him that I was saving up to have cosmetic surgery on my breasts. We must have talked for over two hours and suddenly I realized that it was six-thirty in the morning. I said I ought to go and he phoned for someone to escort me back to the party. Just before I went he produced a sealed envelope.

'Here's a little something,' he said.

Either because I was so tired, or so drunk, it never occurred to me to open the envelope. I just stuck it in my bag.

The party was pretty well over by the time I got back. Half the people had gone and those who remained were

sitting about drinking coffee. Polly was curled up on a sofa, fast asleep. I woke her up and told her we should go. We were escorted to the limousine that was to take us home and it wasn't until I was in the car that I remembered the envelope. I opened it and nearly passed out. It contained £500 in notes. It was the largest amount of money I had ever seen in my life.

I was so excited that I couldn't sleep. I rang up my doctor and went to see him in the afternoon. I told him that I wanted to have my breasts done and that I could afford the operation. I didn't tell him where I'd got the money from – he wouldn't have believed me anyway. He recommended a cosmetic surgeon in Harley Street and gave me a letter.

Looking my most glamorous, I went to see the surgeon in Harley Street. We shook hands and I handed him my doctor's letter. When he read it he looked startled. He had assumed that I was a woman. He seemed taken aback. I imagine he was more used to dealing with ladies of fifty-five requiring face-lifts than with trans-sexuals. He asked me a lot of questions, especially why I thought my breasts were so important. I explained that I intended to have a complete sex-change operation. In the meantime I had a good job but I could earn more money if I could perform topless, and so save up for the big operation. He gave me a time and a date for the operation. He was terribly booked up and it wasn't to be for six weeks. I was impatient. I would have had the operation the next day!

I went to see John, the manager of the show, and told him. He was shocked at first, and worried that I would have scars that would show. I told him that the only scar would be from an incision under the bust that would be hidden by a crease-line and could, in any case, be disguised with makeup. After he'd had time to adjust, he became

enthusiastic about the idea. To have two topless showgirls would be good for the show.

The six weeks dragged by and I was wild with impatience. According to the surgeon's instructions I gave up taking the hormone tablets. Eventually the time came for me to go into the private clinic. It was run by nuns, who were terribly kind and efficient. An hour before the operation a nurse came into my room to give me my pre-med. I was in a bed like a cot and I couldn't relax. I was suddenly nervous. I rang Polly and talked to her, then I began to drift away. I vaguely recall coming round for a few moments in a recovery room, then I slept again and when I finally woke I was back in my room and Polly was there, holding my hand. I immediately struggled to raise my head and look down. I could see two swellings – I was amazed at the size of them – but they were strapped up and bandaged and the only area of skin I could see was around the nipples, which were stretched and very, very shiny. I was parched with thirst and when the nurse came in I asked for a cup of tea. 'You'll bring it up,' she said, but I insisted. She was right. I did bring it up.

Polly sat with me and kept telling me that they looked incredible. I could see that she was green with envy!

I was in considerable pain, an aching, stiff, stretched feeling. There was a little bottle of blood between my breasts, with tubes disappearing into the bandages. I could hardly move my arms, and there was bruising round my armpits. I touched the sides of my breasts, to see if they were hard, but I couldn't tell, because of the bandages.

The blood-bottle was removed the next day, and after four days I was discharged from hospital. The bandages had to stay on for ten days. I went home. Polly was wonderful, doing all the cooking and cleaning, and when

the ten days were up, she went with me to Harley Street, where I was due to have the bandages and stitches removed. She was intensely curious. She sat in the waiting-room while I went in to see the surgeon.

It was agony when he removed the plasters, which he did with four fast tugs. I was lying on my back and felt a tickling sensation as he removed the stitches. He kept saying: 'Good, good, very good. I'm very pleased with you.' Then he said: 'Would you like to see them?'

'You bet I would!' I said.

I stood in front of a mirror and I could hardly believe my eyes. They were amazing. I felt them and they were firm but very soft. I had been so worried that they might be hard. I was so delighted that I kissed the surgeon on the cheek.

Polly was dying to see them too, but she had to wait until we were home again. Then I showed her. She pushed them and prodded them. She was absolutely bowled over.

I went a bit mad. I went out and bought see-through blouses and tops, and dresses with plunging necklines. I wanted to show the world what I'd got and once, at least, I showed a bit too much. I was getting out of a taxi and leaning through the window to pay the driver when I saw that his eyes were popping out of his head. I looked down and saw that the neck-line of my tee-shirt was so low that one nipple had slipped out. I laughed and shoved it back in again, reckoning I'd made the taxi driver's day.

John was delighted with my new look. He sent me down to the costumier to have all my costumes altered, and for the new show I was able to have identical costumes to Dawn's. Now, instead of a padded bra, I wore nipple-caps, stuck on with Copydex, and hid my scars with a little bit of body makeup.

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So there I was at last, topless, and earning an extra £5 a week which I could save towards my main operation.

Throughout this period I had remained out of communication with my family; but I had spoken to Pam on the phone, secretly, once or twice, and she told me that she wanted to come to London to see me. She had left school by now and was keen to see a bit more of life. Eventually I said she could come to stay with me. I met her at Liverpool Street Station and when she first saw me she was almost speechless. We hugged and kissed and she looked and looked at me.

'Where did you get those from?' she said. 'You're bigger than me!'

Back at the flat we had a long talk about Mum and Dad. She told me that they were terribly upset that I'd been out of touch for so long. She said I ought to go up and see them, show them what I really looked like.

'I think Dad imagines you in a sequin dress and a wig and eyelashes and that sort of thing,' she said. 'But when he sees what you're really like . . .'

I decided to go home. I didn't phone to warn them I was coming, I just waited until the weekend and got on a train. I took a taxi from Norwich station out to the village. It was late at night and the house was dark. They had gone to bed. I let myself in through the back door and I heard my Dad's voice shouting: 'Who's that?'

I had to think for a moment before I said: 'It's Barry.'

He came down the stairs, grabbed me, held me in front of him, and just stared and stared at me. I burst into tears and threw my arms round him.

My Mum came downstairs. All she said was: 'D'you want a cup of tea? Are you hungry?'

Laughing and crying, I hugged her and kissed her and we all sat down.

My Dad kept staring at my breasts and asking: 'Are they yours? Are they really yours?'

I told them about the operation, about my job, everything. My Dad was wonderfully sympathetic. He seemed to understand all my feelings.

'I can hardly believe it,' he said. 'It's not what I expected. You look like a girl, a lovely, feminine girl.'

After that, everything was back to normal again. My Mum and Dad came up to London regularly to see me, and I felt that a great burden of guilt and shame had been lifted off my shoulders. We discussed what we should tell the relatives and decided to keep it all a secret. Whenever I went home I made sure it was at night so that none of the neighbours or the people in the village should see me.

For the first time in my life I felt truly relaxed and confident. My Mum and Dad were behind me, the new show was beautiful, and life was great. Dawn and I were both topless, we both had the same costumes, and I felt her equal at last. For nine months I had a ball. I was taking dancing lessons at the Dance Centre and my performance improved enormously as a result. I was so sure of myself that I could cope with the sort of larking around that used to go on during the second show, if we had a half empty house. One night someone stuck a coat-hanger on my tail feathers. I couldn't understand it when the audience started laughing as I turned my back and wiggled my bottom, until I went off-stage. A year before such a thing would have devastated me.

The next logical step in my career was to become a Bluebell Girl; it was what every showgirl worked to attain if they had the height, and I was no different. I had got as

far as I could go in London; the Latin Quarter was the best club to work in. So when I saw an ad in *The Stage* announcing a casting for the Bluebell Girls I went along. I put on my bikini and went through my routines.

Peter, the man who was running the casting, spoke to me afterwards, asked me where I was working, and told me there was definitely a place for me in the Bluebell Revue.

He came to see me in the show at the Latin Quarter – I had no idea which night he'd come – and, after the show, he offered me a job. I was terribly excited and went to see John to hand my notice in. Peter had suggested that I didn't tell him that I was going to the Bluebells, in case he turned nasty, but I was so elated that I came right out with it. John wasn't exactly pleased. I had been a good showgirl and he knew I'd be difficult to replace. But we parted on good terms and shook hands with no ill-feelings.

Peter had been so impressed with my performance that he suggested that, instead of going to Paris, where the majority of new girls were sent to gain experience, I should go straight into the show that was touring Spain and was, at the time, in Barcelona.

Obviously I had to get a passport and I went to see my doctor to ask his advice. He gave me a letter, for the Passport Office, stating that I intended to have a sex-change operation. With this letter, and the documents referring to my change of name, I went down to the Passport Office in Petty France. I was interviewed by a charming, helpful lady. She asked me when I intended to have my operation and I told her that I was saving up for it and had got about a quarter of the money. I told her that I intended to have it done in Casablanca, which was the best place. She explained that, until I had undergone full surgery, she could give me

only a temporary passport, valid for one year, and that I should keep her in touch with my progress. This seemed reasonable.

I took my new passport to Peter and left it with him so that he could make my travel arrangements for me. A few days later he rang me and asked me to go to his office. 'I want to see you about something,' he said. I was puzzled, because I had already signed a contract, but I went.

'Why didn't you tell me?' he said.

'Tell you what?'

'That you're not a girl. You're not, are you?'

I tried to bluff it out. 'I am a girl,' I said – and I didn't consider it a lie. To me, I *was* a girl; I always had been.

He was very kind. 'I know how you feel,' he said, 'but you haven't had your operation, have you?'

I asked him how he'd found out. He told me it had been because of the restriction on my passport. The Spanish authorities had questioned it, he'd made enquiries, and found out.

My immediate thought was that someone from the Latin Quarter had tipped him off, out of jealousy at my getting the job with the Bluebells. The lady at the Passport Office had assured me that the reason for the restriction would never be revealed, and I believed her.

Peter told me that once I had undergone surgery there could be a job for me with the Bluebells, but that, while I was still officially a man, he could not take the risk. If it ever got out it would ruin the reputation of the Bluebell Girls. He'd probably lose his own job.

I was shattered. I'd given up my job, let my flat, wound up my affairs, all to go to Spain. Now there was nothing.

But Peter was as helpful as he could be. He said I could go to Paris. He knew a club where he thought they'd take

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me on and he gave me the name and number of a friend of his, a German girl, ex-Bluebell, who, he said, would help me.

The thought of going to Paris with no certain prospect of a job, with very little money, and no friends, except Peter's contact, terrified me. I had never been out of England before. But what alternative did I have? None. So I went.

Chapter Six

I was terribly nervous at the airport and even more so when I boarded the plane. The hostesses told me that I might feel pressure in my ears. Somehow I got it into my head that if I opened my mouth, it would relieve the pressure in my ears; throughout take-off I sat with my mouth wide open!

I arrived in Paris and immediately rang Peter's friend, Helga. She was terribly sweet and kind on the phone and recommended a place where I could stay. It was a cross between a student hostel, a hotel, and an apartment building in Montparnasse, only five minutes away from the club that Peter had mentioned, the Alcazar.

Helga was managing a small night-club, but she took an evening off and came round to the hotel to meet me. She was very beautiful, blonde with short hair and she was at least six feet tall. This, alone, put me at my ease. I was six feet myself. In fact I'd got quite a complex, socially, about being so tall. I loved wearing high heels but they added too many inches to my height. Helga told me that some of the Bluebell Girls were as much as six feet four and that height, for a showgirl, was a positive advantage.

We went together to the Alcazar. The show was breathtaking. I was flabbergasted. The stage was ten times larger than at the Latin Quarter and the club must have held a thousand people. The stage effects included moving staircases, waterfalls, live animals, and some of the most beautiful and accomplished girls I have ever seen, to say nothing of famous stars. My mind could hardly take it all in. Even now I can only remember a few parts of that show – a can-can routine that lasted half an hour, a war scene with cannons, a wonderful drag artist who did a perfect take-off of Marlene Dietrich, and a Busby Berkeley number on skates. I was dazzled by it all but I was also dismayed. I thought: there's no way I'm ever going to get into this show. These are all polished professionals; they'd never take me on. I told Helga how I felt.

'Nonsense,' Helga said. 'You've been working in London. Peter's told me all about you.'

'You really think they'd give me a job?' I asked.

'I'm sure they will. We'll find out when they're auditioning next.'

Helga was as good as her word. She discovered that there were auditions at the club in a few days' time and she came along with me. I had to have a couple of drinks to steady my nerves – I was petrified. The director of the show interviewed me. He spoke very little English, and I spoke only a few words of French, so Helga interpreted. He asked me if I had a routine I could show him, said I was very beautiful, and seemed enthusiastic about my height. He said that they were short of showgirls and asked me to go and see the wardrobe mistress, backstage, and slip on one of the other girls' costumes. I put on a g-string, a towering head-dress, and nipple caps. The stage manager asked me if there was any particular music I wanted to move to, and

I said anything would do. I heard the first beats of the music and walked on to the stage. All the lights were blazing and the stage seemed to stretch away for ever. For a second I was frozen but then did a turn and a high kick. At the Latin Quarter three steps were enough to cross the stage; here, there didn't seem to be an end to it. I began to run out of ideas for movements. I could hear the director shouting at me from the auditorium though, because of the lights, I couldn't see him. I didn't understand exactly what he was saying – it was in French – but I gathered he wanted me to be 'more sexy'. I was very tense – there was so much bare stage to cover – but I did my best to be 'more sexy' and I heard him say: 'Belle, belle. C'est bon, c'est très bon. OK, OK.'

The lights went out, I went backstage and quickly changed, then went round to the front.

'When can you start?' the director said.

'Tomorrow,' I replied.

He explained that they had just started a brand new show and that he would bring me into it in slow stages. I went for a costume fitting and had some stunning outfits made for me. I was assigned a dressing-room which I shared with two other girls. I asked Helga whether she thought I should tell them what I was and she said: 'I don't think it would matter if you did but I shouldn't say anything. If they ask, tell them.'

I wasn't worried. There were all sorts in the show – burlesque drag and the most outrageously camp male dancers – and it was all very much a carefree atmosphere.

For the first week I just watched the show every night to learn. Then, at last, I was given a small part. Covered in body makeup and glitter I had to stand on the moving

staircase as part of the fountain tableau in the Busby Berkeley number.

Backstage the atmosphere was very free and easy. All the girls helped each other with their body makeup, sponging each other's backs, and the two girls I shared with would walk about the dressing-room in the nude. Obviously that was impossible for me: I had to keep my g-string on all the time. On the night of my debut, after the performance, I got lost in the maze of passages behind the stage, looking for the shower-room. When I eventually found it I was amazed to see that the showers were communal: boys and girls were washing off their body makeup together without any embarrassment. I went back to the dressing-room and waited until everyone had gone and then had my shower. I couldn't do this every night, however, and used to shower with my g-string on, so that everyone thought I was rather strange, a typical 'shy English'. Gradually I began to pick up a few words of French – the usual little phrases – but in the finale of the show, when we all had to sing, I just used to mime silently, hoping that the people in the front row wouldn't notice.

I had one night off during the week and Helga, with whom I'd now become very friendly, began to introduce me to Paris night-life. I discovered that Paris by night more than lived up to its reputation and I had great fun, and one or two surprises.

One night we went to a small club where they had a very sophisticated striptease. It was a tiny stage and a man and a girl were performing. The man was handsome, muscle-bound, and had a particularly hairy chest. Helga and I sat at the back, at the bar, and the head-waiter gave us a lot of attention. Helga knew him and introduced me. He was very charming, spoke excellent English, and was good-

looking, with short hair and a moustache. We were getting on so well that I thought it could be the start of a relationship. So far I hadn't met any men because I thought I had to be cautious. When he went off to serve the tables I told Helga that I fancied him. She laughed so hard she nearly fell off her stool.

'He's not a he,' she said, 'he's a she.'

It freaked me out. I was speechless. Helga told me that everyone in the club was female, even the man performing on the stage. I was flabbergasted. I couldn't believe it. I stared at the man. He was wearing trunks and there seemed to be a big bulge in the appropriate place, to say nothing of the hair on his chest.

'You think *you've* got problems,' Helga said. I laughed, but I was rather shocked. I had really been taken in by the head-waiter.

If Paris held surprises it also held dangers. Near the Alcazar was a little club that stayed open all night, rather like the Cavendish in London, and where you could have something to eat and drink after the show. I started going there regularly and one night I had rather too much to drink. I was tired and decided to go home. I came out of the club at about five in the morning, walked down the alley, and was aware of two rough men coming towards me. They were both tall and they began to talk to me, telling me I was so beautiful, asking me if I was English. One of them put his arm in mine and said we'd all go to a party. I was just declining the invitation politely when the other suddenly ran off down the street. I looked down at my shoulder bag and saw that the flap was open and that my purse was gone. I screamed. The next thing I knew I was staggering against a wall, winded from a punch in the ribs, and the other man was running off. I sobered up in a

few seconds. I was very upset as my purse contained my wages. I reported the incident to the police but they weren't very sympathetic. They said I should have phoned for a taxi at that time of the morning.

Opposite my hotel there was a little bar-restaurant where I used to eat, and drink a half carafe of wine, before going to the Alcazar. The club itself was quite different to the Latin Quarter in that the artistes were allowed to drink in the bars. One evening I was in the bar and met up with some very friendly people who plied me with champagne. By the time I was due to go on-stage I was sozzled. I got through the first part of the show just about all right, grinning like a Cheshire cat, getting my steps all wrong, but managing to arrive at the right place at the right time which was all that really mattered. But the grand finale was literally my downfall. It was a spectacular number at the end of which the stage opened up and an enormous fountain, with splashing water, rose up, while girls were let down from the ceiling on rockets, and other apparatus, throwing streamers and confetti. The showgirls moved to the front of the stage for the last song, throwing streamers into the audience, and then we were supposed to step back, to the side of the fountain, so that the dancers could take our places. I stepped back right into the fountain and went under with a mighty splash. I crouched down in the water, terrified and freezing cold, and saw the stage-manager, in the wings, looking absolutely furious, and signalling me to get out of the fountain. I wanted to stay under cover but I had no choice but to obey. I climbed out of the fountain and stood for what seemed ages with my feathers drooping and dripping and my body makeup streaked and my natural skin showing through. I thought the finale would never come to an end. The rest of the cast were bursting with

laughter and I suppose the audience must have been amazed at the sight of me, but luckily it was very much a fun show and it didn't matter too much. Even so, the manager was livid.

'You were drunk,' he said. 'You were drunk through the whole show.'

I denied it hotly and he couldn't be sure because by that time I was completely sober – the cold water of the fountain had done that.

The atmosphere of the Alcazar was thrilling. Everyone went there. One night, I remember, there was a great fuss and excitement and I realized that Sophia Loren and Ingrid Bergman were sitting in the front row. The show was considered the best in Paris. It lasted a full three hours and contained every sort of variety. The club was a favourite haunt of playboys from all over the world, and as the months went by and I became a familiar face, I began to be wined and dined by all sorts of men.

None of these relationships ever lasted for more than two or three nights. My escorts were only interested in one thing and, naturally, it was the one thing I couldn't do, so they soon lost interest. It was a depressing time for me. I was beginning to drink quite a lot.

There was a late-night restaurant I used to go to, near the Georges Cinq Hotel. You could eat and drink until all hours, there was a piano player, and a very nice atmosphere. I was leaving the place one night when a very tall, good-looking man held the door open for me.

For some reason I could not get this man out of my mind. I kept thinking about him all through the day. The next night, as I was leaving the Alcazar after the show, I saw him again. He came up to me, smiled, and said: 'Do you remember me?'



aged eighteen months, with my brother Terr.





posite: aged five with Terry. I had just started school and was unaware of the
ment to come.

ave: aged seven with my sister Pam. She had just started school so I had her
hold my hand and keep me company.



Above: aged about ten, with my Mum, Dad and Pam on the beach at Great Yarmouth.

Left and opposite: as a teenager. Two photos taken by a friend after leaving school. In London I had the freedom to grow my hair long.







I cared about...
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 arter in the event...
 later (below), I was...
 at the Latin Quarter...
 now able to go topless...

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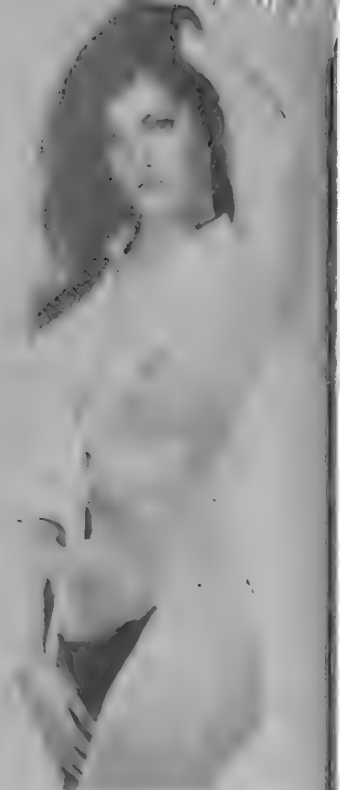
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Above: amateur modelling shots taken while I was working in Rome.

Below: my first card, as Caroline Moon.

Right: my first professional job as a model, dressed as a cowgirl for 'Miss Air Monitor'.



Caroline Moon

Height	6'0
Bust	37
Waist	25
Hips	37
Hair	Golden Brown
Eyes	Green

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MORE PAGE THREE SISTERS TOMORROW

Opposite: Tula, a new name and a new, more natural look with less makeup.
Above: with Pam on Page 3 of *The Sun*. Pam was working at the Playboy Club and had changed her name to Claudia to avoid confusion with another bunny called Pamela.



Roger Moore kept us amused by cracking jokes while we posed for publicity shots on the Corfu location of *For Your Eyes Only*, an Eon Production for United Artists release. I am in the back row, on the left, with (left to right)



la Dean, Chai Lee, Evelyn Drogue, Koko, Vanya, Laoura; (front row) Viva,
n Mills, Lizzie Warville and Alison Worth.



I was getting more varied work: I did the 'Painted Lady' campaign, it got me some jackets (below left) and had a scary time with the lionesses for a MotorWeek calendar.

Opposite: hostingessing the '3-2-1' quiz show with Ted Rogers and other '20s the secs'. I am on Ted's left at the back. © TV Times

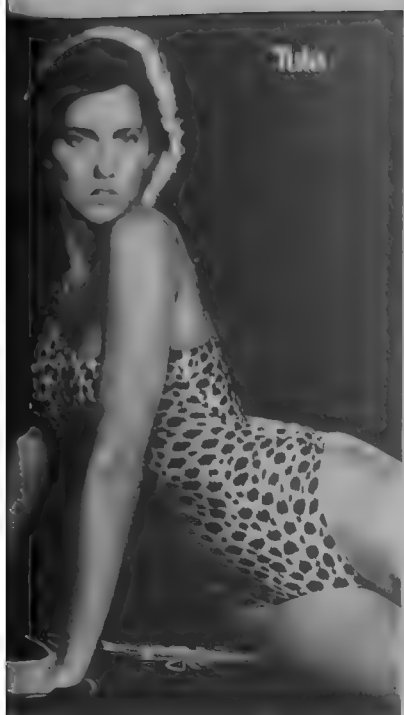






Holiday snaps: enjoying a cold drink with the locals in Kenya (*above left*), with my Mum in the Tivoli Gardens, near Rome, and (*below*) cooling off in the Indian Ocean while on holiday in Sri Lanka.





ore left: a glamour pose for my new card and a shot for an American record
ram sleeve.

ore: a nude photograph, taken in Portugal, for a centrespread.





Above: an elaborate hairstyle created by top London hairdresser David Blair, promote his salon.

Opposite: modelling a hand-printed crêpe de Chine dress for the designer Suchin, showing her collection at the Park Lane Hotel.





CREATIVE PHOTOGRAPHY



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TRUCK
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Top: two of my favourite cover shots for an Arabic magazine and for the first edition of *Creative Photography*.
Left: a poster for Ritzy Jeans, shot in the South of France, but the jeans kept floating out of shot.
Opposite: a beauty shot for my card Ric Blower.





Above. the Smirnoff Vodka campaign, waterskiing behind the Loch Ness monster.

Opposite. a beauty shot for my portfolio by Sanders Nicholson.





Enjoying a night out at Barbarella's in the Fulham Road, with my Mum, Dad and Pam.

I was flustered.

He said: 'I thought you looked stunning in the show. You are a very beautiful lady. Please will you have dinner with me?'

He took me to one of the most expensive restaurants in Paris. It was a wonderful evening. He was immaculately dressed, had perfect manners, and spoke flawless English. I was shy and tongue-tied with him. I found it difficult to look him in the eye. When he took me back to my hotel he said: 'Will you have lunch with me tomorrow?'

I agreed and he collected me the next morning. We spent the day exploring Paris – the Eiffel Tower, the Champs Elysées, Montmartre – and had lunch in yet another grand restaurant. After that I saw him every day and every night. He showered me with presents and flowers. I could hardly take in what was happening and I was also worried about it. I was getting too fond of my handsome admirer. He came from Kuwait, appeared to be extremely rich and lived in a suite at the Georges Cinq.

One night he asked me if I was happy living at my hotel. I said I was not particularly happy there and he asked me if I would move into the Georges Cinq with him.

I had been half expecting this and had worried about what I could say to him. I had grown terribly fond of him, found him desperately attractive, but how could I move into his hotel without revealing the truth about myself? I didn't answer him straight away. I waited until I had had enough drinks to give me some Dutch courage. Then I told him.

He wasn't in the least surprised, shocked, or hurt.

'It doesn't matter,' he said. 'You are a beautiful person and I am in love with you.'

We went back to his suite, drank champagne, and made

love. It was fantastic – just kissing and caressing – and two days later I went to live with him at the hotel.

He told me he was in Paris for another two or three weeks and wanted me to leave the show so we could be together as much as possible. I explained that I had to keep working to save up money for my operation.

He hated the idea of the operation. 'You're so beautiful as you are,' he said. 'Stay as you are. You are perfect. You've got the best of both worlds. You are a boy and a girl – unique. I want you to come home with me, to Kuwait.'

The thought of seeing Kuwait, and of being with H, was thrilling. He told me he would get an apartment for me, as he lived with his parents. He said he would look after me. I couldn't resist. I agreed to leave the Alcazar and go to Kuwait.

The people at the club were hardly surprised when I told them. They all knew about H and me. He'd come to the club every night to see the show – which had always thrown me. But they were all sorry that I was leaving. They said that I was just beginning to become part of the family, that there was a new show in preparation, with a bigger part for me. But the pull of H was too strong.

H flew home. He rang every day to tell me how work was progressing with my apartment, and at last a letter arrived with a first-class ticket and I said goodbye to everyone at the Alcazar. It was all very friendly and I told them if things didn't work out I'd come back.

Chapter Seven

For the first time in my life I travelled first class. But there was no free champagne because I was flying Kuwaiti Airlines and all alcohol was, of course, forbidden. However, there was masses of leg room – important for me! – and the stewardesses couldn't do enough for you. The food was wonderful and they kept offering me more and more until it was coming out of my ears. It was an eight-hour flight and the first part was rather tedious. But once we were flying over the desert it was fascinating. I had imagined that the desert would be white or yellow sand, but it was a sort of brown. I remember I was puzzled by the bright flames I kept seeing flaring up in the middle of nowhere. There would be miles of nothingness and then groups of tiny buildings and these huge tongues of fire. He told me later that these were the oil wells.

What with the immaculate service and the free cigarettes, by the time we began our descent to the airport in Kuwait I felt like a VIP. We landed and I felt excited but very nervous. As I stepped out of the aircraft it was like walking into an oven. The heat was unbelievable. Every curl in my

hair seemed to undo itself instantly and hang straight and limp. We were shown into a bus and driven over to the terminal building. In those days it was just a huge corrugated iron shack which struck me as very primitive compared with Heathrow. I was standing in the queue, waiting to go through customs, when a man in uniform came up and asked me if I was Caroline. I said I was and he ushered me straight through, handing some document to the officials. Nobody even asked to look at my passport. We waited ten minutes for the baggage to arrive and, again, nobody even checked it, just chalked it with a cross. I was led outside and there was a long, gleaming Cadillac with tinted windows. Sitting in the back, in white Arab robes and dark glasses, was H. I realized later that he had stayed in the car, and had worn dark glasses, because he was incognito. He was living with his family – one of the most prominent in Kuwait. I didn't think about any of that at the time. We kissed and cuddled in the back of the car and it was great to see him. I had really missed him.

We drove out to a little place just outside Kuwait called Salamia. We pulled up by a huge, modern block of flats which I thought looked lovely. It turned out that H had bought the whole block and had had people working day and night to furnish and decorate the top floor flat for me. All the other flats were empty shells.

We took the lift up to the penthouse and H picked me up and carried me over the threshold – all very romantic. I was stunned by the flat. It was huge. There was a vast lounge that led out on to an equally vast balcony. The view from the balcony was fascinating. In the foreground was a great sand-dune on which Arabs were sitting, in their robes, silent and motionless, watching the sunset. Beyond the dune was the beach and the sea. There were two bedrooms.

I am a Woman

The main bedroom was in shades of blue and the adjoining bathroom was pink and feminine, like a powder puff. There was a sunken bath, big enough to hold three people, and a mirror that covered one whole wall. The lounge was decorated in brown and beiges, with velvet curtains; there was a stereo, piped to all the other rooms, a television, a film projector. It was as if someone had picked up the grandest suite in the grandest hotel, and stuck it in the middle of the desert.

I went into the bedroom and opened the wardrobes. They were filled with hundreds of dresses, negligés, the sort of expensive, feminine clothes I had always dreamed about owning. The drawers of the dressing-table were full of jewellery.

So began one of the strangest episodes of my life. I had every material comfort money could buy. I never wore the same clothes twice. The kitchen was stocked with every variety of food and drink and there were crates of provisions stacked in the empty flat next door. I had a bodyguard, who lived on the ground floor next to the lift. I just called him on the phone if I wanted to go out, or wanted anything. The flat was cleaned by servants who came in. They were not Kuwaitis. I discovered that the government shared out the oil wealth among all the people. Every Kuwaiti was rich and all the menial work was done by foreign workers. I had my own car – a black Cadillac with tinted windows – driven by my own chauffeur.

H came to see me three times a day: in the morning at about eight, at lunchtime, and in the evening. I found this strange at first but then he explained that he lived with his family and that it would be very bad for him if they found out that he was consorting with a European girl. It seemed quite understandable. It was only after I had been there for

two or three weeks that he told me he was married. His wife was a Kuwaiti girl and only sixteen; he was thirty-eight. I was upset, hurt and disappointed but H explained that marriages in Kuwait were arranged. It was all a matter of family, money, and property. He also told me that, under Kuwaiti law, it was possible to have up to eight wives.

Very occasionally H would visit me at weekends and once or twice he took me away. He owned an amazing villa, ten miles down the coast. It was like something out of a Hollywood film set, completely protected by high walls that ran right into the sea. At night the sea was lit up by powerful searchlights to frighten away dangerous fish.

After a month or so I began to get restless and bored. I wasn't seeing enough of H and the novelty of luxurious living was wearing off. In the flat I felt restricted – as if I was under house arrest – and when I went out I always had the bodyguard and the chauffeur with me. I could see the beach and the sea from my balcony but I couldn't even go swimming. It was forbidden for women to wear bikinis in public. Men could go into the water in trunks but women had to keep their bodies, and faces, covered at all times. One day I woke up and thought: sod the bodyguard! I decided to sneak out and go exploring on my own. I walked along the top floor to the far end of the building where there was another lift. I went down in the lift and decided to walk to the beach. As I crossed the road I brought the traffic to a standstill. Everyone was staring at me and there were the odd shouts. The beach was pretty well deserted except for a few women, clothed from head to foot in black, who turned away and covered themselves when I looked at them. I walked for about two miles. There were people fishing and they gaped at me. I was aware of

I am a Woman

people crouching behind the sand-dunes, peering at me as I passed. I felt that they were waiting to pounce on me and began to walk so fast back to the flat that I was almost running. Safely back in the flat, I went out on to the balcony. The big sand-dune was covered with groups of men all staring up at the flat. I thought: Oh my God, they know where I live. I was terrified that H would discover that I'd gone out alone. I stayed quietly in the flat all afternoon until he arrived in the evening. He didn't say anything, much to my relief. That was the end of my lone adventures.

My days consisted in getting myself up to look beautiful for H. He had an obsession with clean, fresh hair, so I washed my hair every day and began going to the salon in Kuwait, for styling and beauty treatment. He also loved white skin. He absolutely forbade me to sunbathe so even though I was in one of the hottest countries in the world I could not get myself a tan. I used to break the rules from time to time and sun myself for a few hours in the late afternoon and it always earned me a ticking off. Just pottering about all day I became bored and frustrated. H obtained all the latest movies for me and I must have watched hundreds on the screen. He bought me cookery books because I said I wanted to learn to cook. I was pretty hopeless at first, but gradually got better. I became so enthusiastic that one day I decided to do him a traditional English meal – stew and dumplings. I rang my Mum and Dad in England and she gave me the recipe. With the bodyguard and chauffeur I went to the supermarket. It was a strange experience. All the people just stood in the aisles and stared at me. When I stared back they turned their faces away. They made me feel that I was a Martian. At the butcher's I decided to buy a chicken, while I was there. I

couldn't see any chickens but they told me there were some in the back of the shop. To my horror I saw that the birds were all alive and that they were intending to kill one and pluck it before my eyes. Because of the heat, meat and fish were kept alive in Kuwait as long as possible, the fish in buckets of water. I almost became a vegetarian.

H next suggested that I should use my time to learn another language and hired a tutor to teach me. But it was no good. I got more and more bored. I spent hours on the phone talking to Polly, to my sister, and to my Mum and Dad. H suggested that they all come out for a holiday. 'If you miss them so much, I'll fly them out,' he said.

I spoke to Pam, but she was wrapped up in a relationship with a boyfriend. She wanted to come but she was tied up. Polly was tied up too, with her studies, and my parents couldn't face the thought of such a long journey, especially as my Dad didn't like flying. I felt so far away from them all, so cut off and lonely. Even the clothes were no compensation. I spoilt myself outrageously, getting H to buy me everything I wanted, but I was not able to go out and flaunt myself in them. There was nothing he would not buy me – cosmetics and beauty treatments that I could never have afforded at home – but it seemed pointless.

As the months dragged on even our sexual relationship – which had been so marvellous – began to deteriorate.

One day I told him: 'What you need is a boy, not me.'

'I've never slept with a boy in my life,' he said.

I didn't feel I was a man, yet I felt our relations were basically homosexual. I was only really happy when he lay on top of me, as in a heterosexual affair, but he wanted other things, like anal intercourse. We tried but I hated it and couldn't do it.

I am a Woman

I began to want surgery more and more desperately, but the idea always made H furious.

'You are beautiful as you are,' he would say. 'You are different, unique. If you had surgery you would be nothing — neither a man nor a woman.'

I began to hate the sight of my own body in the mirror and H's desire for my body began to sicken and repel me.

I wanted him to desire me in a heterosexual way.

'How can you possibly like me the way I am when I don't like myself as I am?' I would ask him.

Whenever we discussed my going to Casablanca for the operation it would end in a furious row. I knew that Casablanca was in Morocco, an Arab country, and assumed that it could not be too far away. I begged H to let me go there and have the operation but he always refused.

We began to test each other. He would stay away for two or three days to see how much I missed him. I would deliberately not wash my hair, not put on makeup, just let myself go, to see if he still wanted me in that state. He was terribly hurt and upset by this. He couldn't understand how I could do it after all he had done for me. The tension began to build up to an unbearable level. A friend in Paris had once told me that she had heard rumours of girls getting stuck in the Middle East, being kept like prisoners, and never seeing their homes again. I began to have nightmares that this would happen to me. H was rich and powerful — he could do what he liked. I longed for the night-life of Paris and London. I longed to see my family. Most of all I longed for my operation, longed to be complete. I decided to tell H that I was going home.

He cried when I told him, just broke down and sobbed. He begged me to stay until he went back to Europe himself on one of his regular three-month trips. But he could not

leave for two months and I couldn't wait that long. Eventually he agreed to let me go and I booked a flight. H agreed to pay for all my travelling expenses, but when I asked him for some money towards my operation he refused point-blank.

'I'll give you money for anything but that,' he said. 'I'm against it and I always will be. If you want it you must pay for it yourself.'

I rang Pam and told her I was coming back but asked her not to tell anyone else. There was thousands of pounds worth of jewellery in the flat but I decided not to take any of it. H knew my home address and, if I had taken anything, he might have come after me. I felt he owed me something because all the months I had been with him I could have been working and saving, but it seemed wiser to cut my losses.

I left Kuwait with less money than when I'd arrived!

Pam met me at London Airport. She was amazed that I had no tan. She had expected that after all those months in Kuwait I would be black. I spent a day in bed, recovering from jet lag, then got on a train to Norwich. I took a taxi out to the village and sneaked into the house through the back door. My Mum was ironing in the spare room upstairs and I tiptoed in, taking her completely by surprise. I had phoned them from Kuwait a few days before. They thought I was still in the Middle East.

We hugged and kissed – Mum was over the moon – and Mum could hardly believe I was there. Her first thought was that I was in some sort of trouble but I reassured her.

'Things just didn't work out,' was all I said. 'I'm home and safe, that's the main thing.'

I am a Woman

My Dad came home and we talked for hours. He couldn't hear enough about Kuwait and my experiences, he was terribly intrigued by it all. He wanted to know if I intended to go back to work in Paris. I couldn't answer. I didn't know myself. I said I needed time to sort myself out before getting another job and saving up enough for my operation.

'I'll help you,' he said. 'I'll pay. I know how important it is to you.'

I was very touched by this, but I said no. I explained that all sorts of things could go wrong with the operation and that if it was a disaster I wanted it to be my money, not his. My Mum and Dad were not wealthy and I felt I could not accept their hard-earned savings. However, the question still was: what to do next?

I considered going back to the Alcazar in Paris – they had offered me more money and much more to do – but, stupidly, I felt too ashamed. I didn't want people to think that the whole Kuwait trip had been a failure. I decided to go to the Latin Quarter to see what the situation was there and I got talking with one of the male dancers.

'I don't know what to do next,' I said.

'If you want to make money,' he said, 'there's a quicker way than showgirl work. Striptease – that's where the money is.'

I laughed. 'SRIPTease! How the hell can I do striptease?'

'I don't mean here. I mean, abroad.'

He explained that in many European countries striptease acts stopped, by law, at the g-string.

'You've got boobs,' my friend said, 'you'd never have to take your g-string off – you could do it.'

The more I thought about it the more the idea appealed. I asked my friend if he would help me work out a routine. He was a first-class dancer, who worked both at the Latin

Quarter and at the Talk of the Town, and we began to work out a number. We both felt that since my looks were of the sophisticated, classy type, we should try to avoid anything cheap or tacky – bumps and grinds and that sort of thing. Also I had very little money to spend on an outfit so we adapted a simple, elegant black evening dress I had. It had a halter neck and slits up the sides.

‘If you have the dress sequined and use a feather boa, we’ll build the act on that,’ he said.

I had the dress sequined and a tight-fitting corselet made to give me a twenty-inch waist, and we worked out a routine. We listened to various types of music and eventually selected ‘Baby Blues’ by Barry White – easy and smooth. The idea was to create a sultry, sophisticated, but very sexy act.

We discussed various places where I could work. Germany, he said, was a good place, also France and Italy. I didn’t like the idea of Germany, and I certainly didn’t want to go back to Paris, but Italy appealed to me a lot. I had always got on well with Italian men. The Cavendish had been run by Italians and I had become very friendly with them. Italian men, I felt, were definitely my type.

And so I packed my sequined black dress, my corselet, my feather boa, and my cassette tape, and bought a ticket to Rome.

Chapter Eight

I shall never forget my first impression of Rome airport. As I stepped out of the plane and got on to the bus I could see soldiers standing everywhere, with machine-guns. It was bizarre; wherever you looked there were soldiers. After I collected my baggage I went to the information desk and asked about hotels. I had about £200 with me but most of that I considered an emergency fund. I had no idea how long it would take me to find a job and I wanted to spend as little as possible. I wanted somewhere cheap, not grand, but near the centre. The information people recommended a quaint little place five minutes away from the Piazza Barberini and within easy walking distance of all the main areas of Rome. I unpacked, had a meal in the hotel, and then a good night's sleep. The next morning I went out and got hold of all the tourist literature: a map, a train timetable, and a guide-book. I browsed through the guide-book until I came to the night-life section. The biggest advertisement was for a club called the Astoria where you could dine and dance with cabaret and striptease. I thought that since it was the biggest ad it must be the biggest club and so the

next night I got dressed up and went along. The club was open from ten or eleven o'clock until three in the morning. I went along early and asked if there was anyone there who spoke English. They found a man who could speak a little English and I told him that I was looking for a job. I said I was a dancer and had danced in France and London. He asked how old I was and, not knowing what the law in Italy was about dancers, I lied again and said I was twenty-one. In fact I was only twenty. He said that the owner wasn't in the club that night; could I come back tomorrow?

The next night I went back. While I waited to meet the owner I took a good look at the club. It was, in fact, rather small, a nice little place, dimly lit, with a tiny dance floor. I was puzzled because there was no sign of a stage. Later I discovered that the dance floor was raised to form a stage for the cabaret and striptease.

The owner came out of his office and I introduced myself. He spoke pidgin English and when I told him I was looking for a job as a striptease artiste he asked to see my photographs. I made some excuse to cover up the fact that I didn't have many, and offered to show him my costume. I described my act as best I could, but he didn't seem terribly impressed. To my surprise, he said: 'OK. You go on tonight. Do the show. I see your number.'

I was taken aback and petrified. I went to the bar and had a couple of drinks. The show started. The first act was a flamenco dance and it was so polished and professional that it threw me completely. I didn't see how my simple strip routine could compete. Next, a Chinese girl came on and did a wonderful dance with fans. She was followed by a Moroccan belly-dancer and I thought that, with all these beautiful costumes and high-class dancing, I wouldn't stand a chance. I saw the stage-manager signalling to me. 'Get

yourself together,' he said. 'You're on next.' With a sinking heart I handed him my tape, then went and changed into my black sequined dress.

I put everything I'd got into that first performance. I was concentrating so hard on making it sophisticated and sultry that I forgot a lot of the movements I'd rehearsed, but nobody could know that.

The routine was based on a 'You can look but don't touch' theme. Whenever I did something suggestive or sexy I'd flash the men in the audience a severe 'touch-me-not' look – and then proceed to something even more seductive.

At the end of the routine I got a huge round of applause. I smiled, bowed, and ran off the stage. The owner was standing there looking quite flabbergasted.

'When can you start?' he said in a stunned way.

'As soon as you want,' I said.

'Stick around tonight,' he said, 'have a few drinks, I'll give you a contract tomorrow morning.'

I protested that I wasn't properly dressed for the club – I was wearing jeans and a blouse – but he said it didn't matter. I sat at the bar and free drinks came pouring in from all sides. I realized that I had taken the place by storm and I was elated.

I started regular work at the Astoria the next night. Soon I was making over £100 a week. I felt a bit cheap working as a stripper and never admitted it to the people I began to meet during the day. I pretended I was a model or an air-hostess.

After a couple of weeks I decided that I couldn't go on staying at the hotel. There was no night porter and they had to get a key cut for me so I could let myself in at night. Also, it was on the pricey side for me. I asked the hotel people if they knew of anything like a small apartment or

stripper!' I suppose it was very strange, earning a living as a stripper while still, in one vital respect at least, a boy. I got over the problem in the same way that I had in London and Paris, by the use of a specially tight g-string. Nobody ever had the slightest inkling of what I had hidden.

One night though, there was nearly a total disaster. I was halfway through my routine and had reached the point where I was lying on the floor with one leg above my head, and my hand running down the back of my leg. Suddenly the g-string went on one side. The elastic simply snapped. There was a burst of applause and laughter – cheers and catcalls – but my heart was pounding with terror. I'll never know how I had the strength to gather the two halves of the g-string, pull them together, and tie them in a knot, or, having done so, to carry on with my act. Afterwards, when I thought about it, I went cold at the narrow escape I'd had. If it had happened when I was standing up, the g-string would have flapped down – and I would have flapped out! And then God knows what would have happened.

Rome was stunning. It is one of the easiest cities in the world to get to know people. I was invited to all sorts of parties: barbecues in the mountains, on the beach. The beach was thirty minutes away by train from the centre and I spent most of my days sunning myself and fending off swarms of bum-pinching Italian men. Italian girls are pretty much unapproachable and so all the men go crazy about tourist girls and try it on with them. It wasn't too difficult for me to handle them. The last thing I wanted was to get involved with a man. All I wanted was to work hard, save as much money as I could, then go to Casablanca for my operation. All very clear cut. And then, one day, Claudio came walking along the beach and before I knew what was happening I found myself falling in love.

I am a Woman

Claudio was very tall for an Italian, over six feet. He was an Alitalia pilot, very muscular and well-built, with blond hair bleached by the sun, tanned skin, and big blue eyes. We got talking and he asked me about my job. I told him I was a dancer, not having the courage, as usual, to admit that I was a stripper. He asked me where I worked and I said: 'I'm not going to tell you.'

He laughed this off and said: 'I'd love to come and watch you dance. It would be a real thrill.'

He asked me if I would have dinner with him one night. I said that I worked most nights, but he pressed me, and I admitted that I did have one night off a week.

On my next free night he took me out to dinner. We had an unforgettable evening – a candlelit restaurant, the romantic Italian scenery – it was wonderful. I had to stop myself staring at him. He was so handsome that I blushed whenever I looked at him. We went dancing after dinner and I remember how awkward I felt. He held me very close and I couldn't help being aware of his excitement. The problem was that I was excited myself and was terrified that he'd feel it. However, he behaved very correctly and took me home at the end of the evening, kissing my hand in the most gentlemanly way.

'When can I see you again?' he said.

I told him that I didn't finish work until very late at night. I didn't know whether I wanted to encourage him or end the thing before it got serious. As it turned out I wasn't given the choice. When I got home the following night he was waiting for me outside the door. I tried to put him off by saying: 'I usually go out for a bite to eat at this time.' But he just said: 'Fine. I'll come with you.'

I tried another method. I plucked up my courage and told him straight out that I was a stripper at the Astoria.

Tula

He was shocked – I could see that. I suppose he had assumed I was a dancer in a review, which was reasonably respectable, not a stripper, which he thought of as somehow immoral and cheap. However it didn't seem to deter him. He was waiting for me outside the club the next night and almost every night afterwards. We would go out for a meal or a drink but he would never go in to see the show. He was curious to see it but he told me he couldn't bear the idea of watching me on stage showing my body to a lot of men.

Claudio, it became obvious, wanted my body for himself. He was never pushy or demanding, but when we were dancing, or sitting in some romantic spot, he would kiss me and cuddle me and his hand would start moving around here there and everywhere. I would have to say 'No' and stop him.

'I can't,' I'd say. 'It's . . . difficult.'

At first I suppose he assumed I was having a period but when I went on rejecting his advances night after night I realized that I'd have to think up some story. I told him that I was waiting for an operation – true enough – and I imagine that he thought I had some internal trouble down below and was very sweet and understanding about it. He didn't suspect the truth for a moment. We'd been to the beach and he'd seen me in bikinis and he could have had no idea about my little secret. Italian men don't think about that sort of thing.

The problem was that I was falling in love with Claudio and the fact that I was deceiving him made me feel terrible. It made me long even more passionately for my operation. All I wanted was to be able to have a normal heterosexual relationship with him. I was also frightened. I knew that if he ever found out, he was capable of killing me. He was

the 'macho' type of male and his pride would have been badly hurt.

Often I tried to stop seeing him. I couldn't bear the deceit but at the same time I couldn't bear the thought of giving him up. He was just so beautiful.

The months went by. I worked hard, I sold as many bottles of champagne as I could, and I went on seeing Claudio. At last I reached my goal. I had £2000 saved up, which I reckoned would cover the cost of the operation. One day I gave in my notice to the club. They asked me if I intended to come back and I told them I might. I didn't want any hassle with them – and there was none. It was a familiar pattern – girls came and went – although they were genuinely sorry to lose me. I had become a big attraction and their champagne sales had shot up!

I flew back to London. I was raring to go to Casablanca but one night Polly rang me up and came round for a talk. She was very worried about my going to Casablanca. She had heard rumours that the surgeon in Morocco was charging outrageous prices and that several recent operations had gone dangerously wrong. I had always assumed that Casablanca was the best place to go – the only place – but now my faith was shaken. I knew there was a surgeon in London who did the operation but I didn't think he could have the experience.

I was so dubious about Casablanca that I decided to go and see my faithful doctor in the Edgware Road. He told me that there was a surgeon in London capable of performing the operation and that he had had excellent results. I would be much better off having the operation at home. But he said that before I saw the surgeon I would have to go to a psychiatrist, a Dr R. I wish the psychiatrist and the surgeon had given me permission to print their names, as

I feel it would be of great benefit to anyone with the same problems as I had. But they want to remain anonymous, as Dr R and Mr P.

I had heard of Dr R. The rumour was that he was a difficult man and that if he didn't consider that you were mentally stable or if he thought that you were not ready for the operation he would delay things for as much as two to three years. So I was apprehensive when I rang to make an appointment.

I need not have worried. Dr R was absolutely charming. His manner was a little abrupt at first but I soon realized that he was a top class psychiatrist who was only concerned with what was best for me.

I told him that I didn't feel one hundred per cent a woman but that I'd been living and working as a woman for over three years, and that I thought only an operation could solve my problems.

He said: 'Do you realize that surgery cannot make you a woman?'

'I do realize that,' I said, 'but I think it will make me ninety-nine per cent a woman and I'd be very happy with that.'

He explained the laws on trans-sexuals: that I could never make a legal marriage; that my birth certificate, as a male, would not be altered.'

I stretched out on the traditional couch, with a light in my eyes, and he cross-questioned me about my childhood, my sexual feelings. I think that from my answers he concluded that I was a sensible person. He agreed that I was quite right in not going to Casablanca.

* < 'What a place,' he said. 'They give *anyone* an operation there. If I turned up they'd give *me* one.'

We both laughed and he went on to tell me that he had

decided to refer me to a surgeon, Mr P. He said he'd referred a number of patients to Mr P, with excellent results.

I was so excited I could hardly sit still. He was scribbling on a piece of paper.

'Here you are, young lady,' he said, 'this is a letter you must take to Mr P when you make an appointment.'

I wanted to give him a hug and a kiss there and then!

I'm ashamed to say that the first thing I did when I got home was to steam the letter open. I wanted to know exactly what my position was. The letter, addressed to Mr P, was mostly in obscure medical language, but I got the meat of it which was that Dr R considered me mentally stable at present but that to prevent mental deterioration he strongly advised that I should undergo gender reassignment. I carefully resealed the letter and phoned Mr P's secretary for an appointment.

Mr P reminded me of a country doctor. His manner was very cool, but nice and understanding. He opened the letter, read it, and then began to ask me questions, taking me through the whole saga of my childhood and sex-life yet again. I told him that my sex-life was non-existent; all I could do was to lie passively and fantasize. I could not satisfy a partner and a partner could not satisfy me. I told him about Claudio; how deceiving him was breaking me up.

He asked me to go behind the screens, take off my clothes, and lie down. He gave me a thorough examination and said that he did not see any problem at all about the operation. I had enough skin for the operation and my tissue was healthy. He asked me if I was on hormones and I said that I'd given them up just before my breast surgery.

Mr P then sat me down again on the other side of his

desk and proceeded to explain about the operation. First, he told me about the similarities between men and women, how sex, in an embryo, is determined at quite a late stage of its development, when the penis either grows or remains small. The penis, he explained, was like the clitoris, and testicles corresponded with ovaries.

'It's not difficult, visually, to make you a woman,' he said.

He went on to explain that the problem was providing me with a vagina – which he referred to as a 'canal'. I lost him on some of the technicalities at this point but I did gather that basically what he would do was to reduce, surgically the size of the penis, so as to make it into a clitoris, remove the fat from a cavity which exists in all men, to form the 'canal' which would then be lined with the skin of the scrotal sac.

'It's a difficult operation,' he said, 'but I have had a high success rate and I foresee no problems in your case.'

We discussed dates. I was dismayed to find that he was so booked up. He suggested early December but I thought to myself that there was no way I was going to miss spending Christmas as usual with my family, so we agreed on December 29.

I went home for Christmas. It was wonderful to be with my family but I couldn't relax completely: my mind was full of apprehension about the operation. On Christmas day my Uncle, the village blacksmith, came over with presents, and I had to leap out of my chair and dash upstairs to the bathroom, so he did not see me. I sat up there, in the cold, for about an hour. My Mum looked in to see me once. 'We can't be rude to him,' she said, 'he'll smell a rat. He asked after you and we told him you were away.'

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I sat alone, brooding about my operation, and wondering whether I would ever be able to see my relations again.

We had Christmas dinner but after the meal I had another hour's exile in the bathroom when my Grandad came round. I was used to this sort of thing, of course, shooting upstairs whenever the doorbell rang, but in my state at that time I found it particularly horrible. I felt like a criminal.

It seemed like an endless Christmas that year, but eventually it was over and I was in the train going back to London to face the most important experience of my life.

Chapter Nine

I booked into the private wing of the Charing Cross Hospital on 29 December 1974. It was a brand new hospital and my room was on the fifteenth floor. It was a beautiful room, like a hotel room, with a picture window and a balcony, with views all over London, a private bathroom, an intercom system, and a bed with sections that could be raised and lowered electrically at the press of a button. I hadn't known what to bring with me. I brought two dressing gowns, my makeup, and, for some reason, a huge supply of paper tissues.

I signed various forms and paid a deposit, and had blood tests. The anaesthetist came in and introduced himself, checked my blood pressure, listened to my chest, and asked me about allergies. I had an enema and was then told I would have to fast for forty-eight hours.

They told me that the operation would be performed on the morning of the 31st and that I would have my pre-med at roughly half-past eight in the morning. Time dragged by. In the afternoon Mr P appeared, carrying some papers.

'I have some papers for you to sign,' he said. 'I have

someone else to see and I'll pop back in half an hour. Just look through the papers.'

I did look through them and they freaked me out. They were formal documents authorizing the removal of my penis and testicles, and a skin graft if it should prove necessary. They went on to say in the event that the operation was a failure I would have no come-back, but would accept whatever the surgeon had been able to do for me.

I had longed for this operation for years; but seeing it all written down in black and white upset me terribly. What was worse was the idea that the whole thing could turn out to be a disaster; it panicked me.

I rang my Mum and Dad in a terrible state. My Dad calmed me down, level-headed and sensible as always.

'It's obviously just a formality,' he said. 'Naturally the surgeon has to safeguard his own position. He wouldn't have accepted you as a patient if he didn't think he could do the operation successfully. If he didn't have a high success rate he wouldn't be in business at all. Just calm down and don't worry.'

But I wasn't totally reassured. I was haunted by the nightmare that I would go through all this and wind up still not being able to have normal sexual intercourse. If that happened I knew that I would not want to go on living.

However, I signed the papers and when Mr P came back to collect them I told him how worried I was.

'I can assure you that everything will be all right, Miss Cossey,' he said. 'This is just a formality. You'll be a lovely lady after the operation, I promise you. What you have to do now is to get a good night's sleep. Would you like something to help you sleep?'

I nodded and he prescribed some sleeping tablets for me.

'I'll see you in the morning,' he said. 'Don't worry. You'll be fine.'

A few minutes later the nurse came in with a metal bowl and a disposable razor.

'It's shaving time,' she said cheerfully. 'Would you like me to do it, or will you do it yourself?'

'I'll do it, thank you,' I said firmly.

I went into the bathroom to shave myself, in case anyone came into the room while I was doing it. It was a tricky business.

For the next couple of hours I was on the phone to all and sundry. I spoke to my friends and told them where I was and what was about to happen. I said I was determined to go ahead; there was no turning back.

I had a restless night, even with two Mogadons. I drifted into a doze, woke, then drifted off again. I had taken a sip of water with the tablets, but I was terribly dry and hungry. I was wide awake when the nurse came in to open the curtains in the morning.

'Good morning. Had a good night?'

'No,' I said, 'I was terribly nervous.'

'That's only to be expected,' she said. 'Don't worry. You'll have a good night tonight, won't you?'

'I don't know,' I said.

She ran a bath for me and I got into it. I had locked the door and I had a good cry. Yesterday time had crawled by, today it was racing. I am not a churchgoer but, like a lot of people, I feel the need to pray to someone or something in a time of great stress and worry. I prayed then, prayed that the operation would be a success.

The nurse came in and gave me my pre-med. I waited for the high, light-headed sensation I had experienced before with my breast operation but it didn't come. In fact, the

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opposite happened and I became emotional and tearful. The nurse helped me into a white gown and put my arm-band on. I was panicky and irrational. I suddenly remembered all the stories one hears about arm-bands getting mixed up and people getting the wrong operation. What if someone had my operation by mistake? The idea would normally have made me laugh; in the circumstances it made me cry.

The hour fled by; obviously the pre-med was taking effect. The nurse came in and reassured me but every time she opened her mouth I cried. I was in a terrible state. Two porters in white jackets came in and lifted me on to a trolley. The nurse held my head and was terribly sweet, comforting me and telling me everything would be fine. The journey to the operating theatre seemed endless. We arrived, and I was surrounded by men in long robes. I couldn't recognize any of them because of the masks over their faces. I was still crying and complaining and someone told me to lie on my side.

'You'll feel a little prick in your back and I want you to wiggle your toes for me.'

I felt the jab of a needle and began to wiggle my toes. Suddenly I couldn't wiggle them any more and I couldn't even feel my legs.

'Don't worry. You're fine. That's good. Now lie on your back. I'm going to give you an injection and I want you to count.'

I remember saying 'one', I remember bright lights and a masked woman staring down at me and then the next thing I was waking up in a dark room. It was night. There was a dim light by the bed and a nurse was sitting by my side.

'Happy New Year,' she said.

I floated away again and the next time I surfaced I was

aware of a strange sensation in my private parts – a sort of extreme heaviness and tightness. I was aware, too, that both my arms had drips in them. Then I went out again. Apparently the operation had taken five hours.

When I next came round Pam and her boyfriend were in the room. Pam held my hand and kissed me. 'Are you all right?'

I could still feel the heaviness between my legs. It was not pain exactly but a gnawing discomfort, a strange sensation. I remember seeing Pam's boyfriend pacing up and down at the far end of the room, and then I went out again.

For most of that day I was unconscious but when Pam visited me again in the evening I was up to a little conversation, though I felt very weak.

'Do you remember seeing me this morning?' Pam asked.

I nodded and asked her where her boyfriend was.

'He couldn't face coming again,' she said. 'He spent the whole time he was here walking up and down clutching himself.' She laughed. 'He said he was having sympathy pains. He said you'd understand.'

It wasn't until much later that I saw the funny side of that.

'Anyway,' Pam said, 'the main thing is that apparently it's been a complete success. Isn't that wonderful?'

We talked on. I was exhausted and was beginning to get some very alarming twinges and aches. The nurse came in and gave me an injection in the thigh. After that, I went to sleep.

The next morning I was feeling brighter. The drips were taken out of my arms, which were sore and marked with yellow bruises. Pam brought me flowers and arranged them beautifully in a vase. I suddenly realized that my room was

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full of flowers sent by family and friends and they made me feel I was back in the world.

The pain, the real pain, began at lunchtime. It is difficult to describe the excruciating sensation. It was as if I was sitting on the edge of a cliff with my private parts hanging over and that a huge weight was attached to them, pulling them down. I begged the nurse for another pain-killing injection but she said that I was allowed only so many a day and that I'd had my quota for the time being. She gave me some tablets but they didn't help.

At about five Adrian came to see me.

'How did it go?' he asked. 'Everything OK?'

'Apparently,' I said. 'They've been in and said it was a success. But they can't really tell until all the padding comes out which won't be for another three days. God, the pain. It's agony.'

I rang for the nurse. She came in after a moment and I asked for a pain-killing injection.

'You're not due for one until eight o'clock I'm afraid,' she said.

'But I can't stand it. It's agony.'

'Well, I'll have a word with Matron – but I'm sure she'll say no.'

She returned in about five minutes to say that Matron had decreed that I must wait until eight.

I lost my temper. 'Don't you understand I'm in fucking agony?' I said. 'I'm a private patient. I'm paying, for God's sake. Just give me something.'

Adrian turned to the nurse, with embarrassment, and said: 'Well you may have turned her into a woman, but you certainly haven't turned her into a lady.'

The great day came when my bandages were due to be

removed and the 'mould' which had been placed inside me was to be taken away. It was an important day in my life because I would know, for sure, whether the operation had been the success everyone had said it had. Mr P arrived and asked me if I minded a couple of student nurses watching. I said: 'Of course not,' and I was glad I had because those two men not only gave me moral support but they physically held me down and prevented me from lashing out.

I have never known such a weird, unendurable pain.

Mr P snipped away the bandages – that was nothing compared to what I'd been through already – but then he produced an instrument that looked like two shoehorns. He put this thing right inside me, then pulled. It was as if my whole insides were being drawn out. I thought I'd pass out. A burning flush swept through me and I could only just stop myself from screaming.

Mr P was busy with balls of cotton-wool and surgical spirit, cleaning me up. He was talking enthusiastically, telling me that everything looked fantastic. But I was past caring. The only thing I wanted was for them all to go away so that I could scream my head off in private.

By my second week in hospital, I was feeling much perkier. I was still weak from not being able to eat anything solid, just soup. But I was much more cheerful, so much so that when a girlfriend came to visit me I was up to playing a prank on her. We were chatting quite merrily when she suddenly said: 'I wonder what they do with it? You know – afterwards.'

'It?'

'Yes – you know.'

'Oh – it,' I said. 'Oh well they keep it, of course, if you want it.'

'You mean—?'

'Oh yes,' I said casually, 'I asked them to keep it for me. I'm going to have it turned into a cigarette holder. As a matter of fact it's in the bathroom if you want to see it. I've hung it on the bath taps.'

She looked at me doubtfully for a second and then realized I was joking. We chatted on about various things – what I was going to do when I got out of hospital and all that – and about half an hour later she said she had to go to the toilet. She disappeared into the bathroom but re-appeared after only a few seconds. Her face was as white as my sheets and she plonked herself down in a chair.

'Are you all right?' I said. 'You look terrible.'

She didn't answer but keeled over, knocking the bedside table right on to me. I was frantic. I couldn't move, couldn't get the cabinet off me. I rang for the nurse in a panic. She came in, I shuffled over to one side of the bed, and she laid my friend out beside me and gave her some smelling salts. I suddenly realized that my joke had gone a little too far. The bath had one of those long, plunger-type plugs, which looked extremely phallic – and it was hanging from the bath taps.

I hadn't known that my friend had such an imagination.

She came round, full of apologies and I told her how sorry I was. She told the nurse that hospitals and dentists always made her faint and the nurse went off to make her a cup of tea.

When the nurse had gone we had a good laugh but my friend said: 'Do you mind if I don't come and visit you again? I don't think my nerves can stand it.'

The day came for my third ordeal – the removal of my catheter. I had reckoned that it would be painful but I was not prepared for what happened. When Mr P cut the tube

it was as if the whole of my insides was deflating, as if the wall of my stomach was collapsing. When he pulled the tube out it was like having razor blades dragged through me – a cutting, burning sensation.

'Well,' he said, cheerful as ever, 'you'll be going on your own now.'

'How will I know when I want to go?' I said.

'It'll be just the same as it was before.'

I wasn't completely convinced. It was all so new to me. I couldn't understand how it could be the same as before. I was frightened that I wouldn't recognize the sensations, that it wouldn't work.

After an hour or two I felt I wanted to pee. I rang for the nurse and told her.

'I don't think you really do,' she said, but when I insisted she called for another nurse. They helped me out of bed (the first time I had been out of bed since the operation) and into the bathroom. They sat me down on the toilet. I felt hot flushes coming over me, and couldn't do a thing. I just sat there, miserably. The nurse turned on all the taps in the hope that it would encourage flow, but it was no good.

'Obviously you don't want to go,' she said.

'But I feel I do.'

'You're probably just sore from the catheter. It doesn't matter. Just be patient.'

A few hours later I felt I wanted to go urgently. I rang again, and again they helped me out of bed into the bathroom. I sat down, on went the taps, and the nurse said: 'Just relax. Relax.'

What happened next was, looking back on it, hilarious – but at the time it completely freaked me out.

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I yelled: 'Oh my God, it's coming!' and come it did – but in a vertical jet, straight up the wall in front of me.

I burst into tears. After all I had been through it seemed that I couldn't perform the most basic bodily function as a woman.

'Don't worry, don't worry,' the nurse said. 'Just put your head between your legs and double over. Here, I'll help you.'

'But I can't spend the rest of my life doing a headstand every time I want to pee,' I said.

The nurses shook with laughter.

'It's nothing,' one of them said. 'Where you had your catheter in it's twisted your urethra into an angle. In a couple of days the swelling will go down and you'll be able to go quite normally, I promise you.'

They got me back into bed again and went out, leaving me alone. I lay back and relaxed for a few minutes and then I realized that they had not replaced the nappy-like towel I'd been wearing up to then. I suddenly had a desire to have a proper look at myself. Until then I hadn't been able to bend forward properly to look at myself. I was aware that I had nothing there now, but I wanted to see exactly what I had got. I sat up and raised my knees. I took a mirror out of my cabinet and shone the bedside light on the bed, between my legs. I peered down at myself in the mirror and was startled by what I saw. It seemed to be a cross between a patchwork quilt and a pound of liver. It was strange, but for the first time I really felt that everything had worked out, that I was going to be all right.

The next day was my sister's birthday and we had what we called a combined birthday and fanny-warming party in my room, with all my friends. We invited Mr P, Matron, Sister, and all the nurses and I was allowed to have

half a glass of champagne. It was definitely the best party I've ever had and I felt at last that life was getting back to normal, and couldn't wait to get out of hospital.

I left the hospital on January 14. Pam came to pick me up. I put on a loose-fitting dress and although I was still weak and shaky on my legs it was a marvellous feeling being able to slip on a pair of panties without having to put a g-string on first. I was still very sore, but the feeling of freedom made up for it.

We went back to Pam's flat, stopping to do some shopping on the way. I bought boxes of salt because I was told to have regular salt baths as that was the best way to heal me up. I had arranged to go straight home after coming out of hospital so Pam took me to the station, and saw me off.

As I took my seat on the train I felt I was in for a relapse. I felt weak, flushed and wobbly. The train began to fill up with people and I realized, to my horror, that it was a commuter train, and that nearly all the passengers were men. I was sitting in a carriage crammed with people. I felt that every single one of them was looking at me, and that they all *knew* what I had just been through. I tried to read the magazine I'd bought but I couldn't concentrate. There was one man in particular who kept staring at me. I had a sudden fear that I was going to be raped. Obviously the drugs were still playing up with my mind, but I couldn't get the fear of being raped out of my thoughts. Later, I realized how stupid I'd been and laughed at myself: the first time you travel in public as a complete woman and all you can think about is being raped!

When the train pulled into Norwich Station I was amazed to see my Dad standing on the platform. Normally he would wait in the car in the car park in case there was anybody from the village or anyone he knew at the station.

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He put his arms round me and kissed me. He didn't seem to care if anyone saw us or recognized me.

'Are you all right?' he said.

I said: 'Yes.'

'Come on, then. Mum's waiting in the car.'

Mum gave me a huge hug and kiss and I just sobbed, I was so happy.

'What's the matter?' Mum said. 'What are you so upset about?'

'I'm just so happy,' I said. 'Everything's fine now, just fine.'

It was a wonderful homecoming.

Chapter Ten

After two weeks of blissful convalescence at home I went back to London to see Mr P. He examined me and told me that everything was perfect.

'But listen,' he said, 'you're not to rush things. You must be patient. You should wait at least six weeks before you try having intercourse.'

I was getting used to being patient by this time, but even so I was raring to go and decided to go off to Italy. At this time Pam was having trouble with her boyfriend and she was curious to see what Rome was all about and decided to come with me. I had no idea what I was going to do in Rome, apart from have a holiday and see Claudio. The operation had cost £1500, a lot less than it would have done in Casablanca and so I had some money left over and didn't have to look for a job straight away.

Claudio met us at the airport in Rome and gave me a big hug and kiss. He asked me how the operation had gone and I told him that everything was fine, fantastic. Pam and I went to stay at the place I'd lived before, where I was welcomed back like one of the family.

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I was seeing Claudio every day and though half of me was longing to spend the night with him, the other half was frightened. Pam was my confidante and advisor.

'What would happen if he – well, broke something? Or I started bleeding or whatever?' I said.

'Don't be silly,' she said. 'Nothing like that will happen. Claudio's kind and gentle. It'll be all right.'

'You don't understand,' I said. 'I'm talking about losing my virginity.'

We both broke up and laughed at that. It was a daft thing, after all.

All my fears about Claudio being violent or too passionate proved groundless. We made love and it was as beautiful, as incredible as I'd always imagined in my dreams.

It was the reward for all my years of struggle and worry and I was so happy, so elated, I just wanted to kiss everyone in the street.

I had always liked Rome, but now I fell in love with it. The weather was wonderful and I showed Pam all the sights – the Colosseum, the Trevi Fountain, all the tourist places – and she was fascinated by it all. We went to the beaches and she loved all the attention she got from the men. Claudio and I were closer than we'd ever been, now that I could give him a normal sexual relationship.

I remember the first really scanty bikini I bought. It struck me one day that I could now wear brief bikini bottoms, with ties at the side, and I bought the briefest possible! Before I had always had to have the old-fashioned type to hide my g-string.

We were spending quite a lot of money and I didn't like the idea of running myself too low so we began to think about getting jobs. Claudio suggested we should get work as Go-Go dancers.

'You're both great dancers,' he said, 'and clubs are always looking for girls.'

We found a club that had all the facilities for Go-Go dancers but no girls. The owner explained that he'd found the girls he'd hired too unreliable. We promised we'd stay for six months and wouldn't let him down and he agreed to give us a chance.

We used to perform in a sort of cage above the audience. We'd dance in bikinis, with spotlights on us, taking it in turns to perform. It was all fantastic fun even though the money – about £50 a week – wasn't too hot. However, by sharing a room we cut our expenses down and managed pretty well.

My relationship with Claudio began to go wrong. It was nothing to do with him: he was as loving and kind as always. It was entirely me. Looking back, I feel deeply ashamed of my attitude at that time. I loved Claudio – I still love him – but I had a terrible urge to go out and explore other relationships. My feelings had been frustrated and bottled up for so long that I wanted to cut loose and meet as many men as possible. Rome seemed to be filled with gorgeous men and I wanted to know them. All I could think about was being wined and dined by different men and flirting with them. I wasn't a stripper any more, men could respect me as a Go-Go dancer and I wanted their respect.

It was a hectic but marvellous period of my life and there were only two clouds on my horizon: the fact that I'd hurt Claudio, and a complex about my Adam's Apple, although nobody had ever commented on it. I felt that my Adam's Apple was the final trace of the boy left in me. Being a typical Virgo and a perfectionist, I wanted to have it removed.

I am a Woman

I began to save up money again, for the throat operation, and as winter came on, and the beaches and clubs emptied, I thought about going home. Pam and I were both missing Mum and Dad and London and I thought it would be a good time to have the throat operation since my savings, plus what was left over from the main operation, would cover the cost.

Back in London, I went to see the surgeon who had done my breast operation. I spoke to his secretary and she told me that there was an Ear, Nose and Throat surgeon in the same building who could probably help me. I made an appointment and went to see him.

He told me that an operation was possible but that it was extremely difficult. It involved a complete reconstruction of the vocal box and there was a real danger that I could lose my voice permanently.

Obviously this worried me; but having gone so far already I was determined to finish the job. I asked him if it would affect my voice in any way? He told me that it would have an effect, that my voice would be more mellow but I would not have the same range as before.

I said I wanted to have the operation and suggested that, at the same time, he might as well do some cosmetic surgery on my nose and eyes as I wanted to look like Sophia Loren. He became quite angry, and said: 'The trouble with you people is that you're never satisfied!'

We both laughed and I agreed that perhaps a nose and eye job was going too far and that the throat operation was dodgy enough. I suppose I suggested the cosmetic surgery because I wanted a new look. It wasn't that I didn't feel I was beautiful. Everyone told me I was. It was just that I wanted to change, completely. Looking back, I'm glad the

surgeon talked me out of it. He was right: the throat operation was tricky enough.

Of course it was not nearly so painful or as fundamental as the main operation but even so it was a trial. For days after I felt as if I had a wicked case of tonsillitis, a thick, swollen, sore feeling. I left the hospital after a week. And I had to be very, very careful afterwards. For some weeks I was not allowed to speak loudly or smoke and even today I do not feel that my throat is as it was before the operation. Whenever I swallow I am aware of something in my throat and my voice doesn't have nearly the same range it used to.

However, I did not lose my voice and though it was impossible to remove the Adam's Apple completely, nobody has ever noticed any trace of it. The operation was beautifully done and the scar is hidden in a crease-line.

I now had to consider what I should do, what sort of career I could have. In Rome I had done a bit of amateur modelling and had collected some reasonable photographs. I was reading *The Stage* one day when I saw an advertisement – a top model agency was looking for new faces. I rang the number and was told I could go along any evening between four and six and so I thought I'd give myself a chance and went along.

There were three other girls there and I waited nervously for my turn. I was shown into an office and introduced to Yvonne Paul, the head of the agency. She is a very beautiful woman herself, obviously an ex-model, and my first impression was of someone who was very firm and very together. I handed her my book of photographs and she looked through it carefully, saying very little. When she'd finished she turned to me and said: 'Well, you've got some really nice pictures here, a little theatrical but—'

She seemed genuinely enthusiastic and I explained that

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some of the shots had been taken when I was dancing and that was why they were over the top as far as makeup went.

'I'd like to get a photographer in,' she said, 'to do some tests on you.'

She explained that the first step was to produce what's called a card – half a dozen or so selected shots on a single card that could be mailed all over to photographers. She arranged sessions with a couple of photographers and the results were lovely though I had a completely different look in those days. At that time my eyebrows were tweezed almost out of existence because I was used to pencilling them on and wearing heavy false eyelashes to make my eyes look bigger on stage. Later I went for a fresher look, with natural eyebrows and learned to avoid looking too made-up.

It took about ten days to get the shots done and the card made up and mailed. Yvonne paid for it all. She told me that she had complete confidence in me and that I could pay her back out of my first earnings. I thought this was great: I'd heard so many stories about aspiring models getting ripped off and being made to pay for this and that and then never getting any work. I talked it through with Yvonne. I told her I didn't want to waste her time or mine; I wanted an honest opinion. But Yvonne seemed to be genuinely enthusiastic.

The card went out and I waited anxiously for results. One morning Yvonne rang me and she seemed terribly excited.

'The phone hasn't stopped ringing,' she said. 'It's not a question of looking for work it's a question of being very selective about the photographers you work with. They all want you.'

Tula

Needless to say, I was thrilled.

The first big casting I went to was with a company who manufactured an air-cleaning system. In their new promotion they wanted a girl – to be called ‘Miss Air Monitor’ – to build the campaign round. When I was told I’d got the job I went down to the factory to learn how the system actually worked. It was based on static electricity which removed particles of dust, smoke and pollution from the air without affecting the temperature and was fantastic for places like pubs, restaurants, and factories. Steven Yass shot the photos. They appeared in various magazines and had different themes: a gypsy theme, a karate theme, a cowboy theme and so on. It was Steven’s first job as well, so we were both a little nervous.

As well as the advertising campaign, the job involved travelling round the country making personal appearances at demonstrations of the system. It was all very exciting for me. I attended lunches and other functions, started a balloon race, met all sorts of celebrities, and became a little tiny bit of a celebrity myself.

The question arose of thinking up a professional name for me. My stage name, as a dancer, was Caroline Moon, but Yvonne told me she already had a Caroline on her books and there could be a confusion. Also there was a Caroline Moore, who was a model.

‘Caroline won’t do,’ she said. ‘You’re very tall so why don’t we go for something short and simple. There was a Swedish girl we had on the books a while back whose name was Tula. How does that sound?’

‘Tula?’ I said. ‘What does it mean?’

‘Well, in Hindu apparently it means pure gold.’

I was naturally a bit dubious. ‘What does it mean in

Swedish?' I asked.

'I believe it means a tree.'

'That's me,' I said – and Tula I became.

With my new name, and my new look, I was starting to do glamour modelling. I got booked with half a dozen glamour photographers who syndicated my pictures all over the place. A couple of staff photographers from *The Sun* booked me and I made my first appearance on the famous Page 3, during a 'New Faces' week. After that the phone never stopped ringing: Page 3 is a great help to a model's career.

A couple of weeks later *The Sun's* photographer called me again. They had heard that I had a sister who was also a model. Pam was at this time working at the Playboy Club as a bunny and had taken on a professional name – Claudia – because there was already a Pam at the Playboy. *The Sun* was planning a 'Sisters Week' and wanted to feature me and Pam. We did it and it was great fun. It helped to launch Pam as a model in her own right and I was thrilled. Little did I know how much trouble it was to cause in the future.

I was so busy, and so excited by this new life and career, that I hardly stopped to consider that it might be dangerous if my past caught up with me. I did have one warning. One day Yvonne rang and asked me if I'd do some shots for a photographer called Brian. He had phoned several times and was anxious to book me. The name took me right back to my days at the Latin Quarter. Brian had been the boyfriend of my fellow showgirl, Dawn. It had been he who had suggested selling my picture to a newspaper then selling a picture of me dressed as a boy to a rival. I knew that if I agreed to work with him now he would probably recognize me and make the connection. I made up a story

Tula

to Yvonne to explain why I didn't want to work with him – I said he'd had a relationship with a girlfriend of mine and had behaved badly – and Yvonne accepted this and didn't ask any questions.

In all the hustle and bustle I forgot all about the incident.

Chapter Eleven

I had plenty going on to make me forget, and not only work but the sort of strange things that happen to models.

Pam and I had moved into a furnished service flat in Chelsea. We had found living in a hotel too expensive, but didn't want to commit ourselves to a permanent place in case we should want to return to Italy or go elsewhere. One day I was waiting in the King's Road for a taxi when I noticed a large, blue Rolls Royce parked by the kerb with a chauffeur standing by it. Nothing unusual for the King's Road maybe, except that the chauffeur was obviously staring at me.

The next day this chauffeur rang me up. He told me his name was Roger, that he'd got my number from the porter of the flats.

'You're an absolutely stunning woman,' he said, 'and my boss is in love with you. He wants to give you something.'

Assuming it was either a gag being played by some friend, or that the chauffeur was a nutcase, I laughed it off and he hung up. But the next day he appeared at our door with an enormous bunch of long-stemmed red roses.

Face to face Roger seemed perfectly normal and harmless: in fact he was rather handsome. He told me that his boss wanted very much to take me out, although he wouldn't say who he was. Not wishing to get involved I told him that I had a regular boyfriend and was not interested.

Over the next few weeks I was showered with an amazing variety of presents: expensive scents, a diamond watch with a matching cigarette lighter, and more and more roses. Then, for two weeks, I did not hear anything from Roger although the roses continued to arrive regularly. The next thing that happened was a call, one night, from Paris.

'Is that Caroline?' a voice said.

'Yes,' I said. 'Who is it?'

'I'm Roger's boss.'

I was taken aback but thanked him for all the presents and asked him where he was.

'I'm in Paris at the moment,' he said, 'but I'll be in London in a couple of weeks and I'll call you up. In the meantime I was wondering who your favourite dress designer is and what size you take.'

'That's terribly sweet of you, thank you,' I said and told him I took size 12 and liked Christian Dior.

For the next week or so I was waiting for some fabulous Dior creation to arrive but it never did. The roses stopped coming and I never heard another word from Roger or his mysterious boss and have never been able to think of any logical explanation for the incident.

Meanwhile my modelling career was opening out and I began getting assignments in Europe. Yvonne had a branch of her agency in Germany, where all her models' cards were circulated, and I started to get regular bookings from European photographers.

My first big trip abroad was an assignment in Tobago. There were three of us on the trip, two regular Page 3 girls and myself. I was apprehensive about working closely with other models – there's a lot of backbiting in the profession – but we all shared a room, got along fine, and I had a fantastic time. Other trips followed: to Portugal, Kenya, the Maldives, Hawaii and it all started happening. I was making as much as £200 a day which seemed too good to be true. I was getting wonderful work but it was all glamour work and I began to worry about getting typecast. I didn't want to become known as Tula the glamour model, I wanted to do advertising and fashion as well, and began to hold up on topless work, feeling that I was getting too much exposure in every sense.

My year's contract with Air Monitor was coming to an end and I was offered another, similar job by a company that made crash-helmets and other accessories for motor-bikes. They had come up with the brilliant idea of featuring a Painted Lady in their campaign. Instead of putting me into tight-fitting outfits they wanted to hire artists to paint the gear directly on to my body. About ten years previously the famous model Verouschka had done something similar.

So I became the Painted Lady. It was very exciting but very tedious. It would take a team of three artists to paint just one section of me: they never painted my whole body at one time, but took it in sections appropriate to the shots the photographer wanted – frontal, side-on, back and so on. The artists' work was amazing. They painted in the finest detail, right down to the individual teeth on a zipper for instance.

The campaign was a huge success and as 'Tula The Painted Lady' I did the rounds of exhibitions, ending up at the big Earl's Court Motor Cycle Exhibition where I signed

posters. As a result more and more advertising work started to come in and there was less of the calendar and topless stuff.

But there was one calendar job I remember particularly vividly because my problem – for once – helped. We were shooting a calendar for a company called MotorWay and the theme was circuses. There were three of us booked, each assigned to do different things – mine, for some reason being the trickiest: in one shot, I had to go into a cage with five lionesses. I was given strict instructions: never to turn my back, always to look the lionesses straight in the eye and never to make quick movements. I found it very difficult to keep my eyes glued to the lionesses because as I posed – standing and sitting – in different positions there were several photographers shouting: 'Look at me!'

There was a man with a gun ready, but he didn't have to use it. It wasn't until I left the circus ring that I nearly had hysterics. I was told that a woman had never been in with the lionesses before as they were very jealous of any other female. My immediate thought was that they might have felt my presence as that of a male and that my problem might have saved my life.

But when I got back to London there was plenty of much easier work coming in and I forgot all about the dangerous job. I began to do television work. I had walk-on parts in the 'Two Ronnies' show, and others in a Max Bygraves show, 'Robin's Nest', a Petula Clark show, with Richard Briers in 'The Other One' and I also had a kissing scene with John Alderton in 'The Upchat Line'. I felt I was broadening my field and at the same time getting useful publicity. The work itself I found rather tedious. There's so much hanging around in a television show. You'd arrive in the morning full of enthusiasm to work, and then you'd

wait and wait and they'd eventually get round to using you late in the afternoon by which time your makeup and hair needed retouching and your enthusiasm had half gone. Still, I did feel that there might be possibilities of gradually moving from pure modelling and into a little bit of acting - which was exciting.

And then, just as I was getting away from pinups and calendars and Page 3 there came an offer from the French magazine *Lui* for a centrespread. *Lui* is probably the classiest, most tasteful and elegant girly magazine. The money they were offering was excellent, and it was a chance to work with one of the world's top photographers, Francis Giacobetti - so I went to Paris.

It was all very tasteful and Giacobetti was wonderful to work with, absolutely charming. He was the man who did the art direction on the original *Emanuelle* film. We did side-on shots, with pubic hair showing, no open-leg stuff. The pictures were syndicated in Germany and also used in *Oui* in America and I made a nice bit of money.

Pam and I decided to look for an unfurnished flat which could be done up and which would cost a lot less than the service place. We felt we wanted to save as much as we could to buy a place of our own eventually. We loved Chelsea but it was too expensive and found a flat in a lovely block in Kensington. It was small but suited us perfectly and we had it painted and carpeted and bought bits and pieces of furniture.

And then I heard about a casting for a new TV show to be hosted by Ted Rogers which would feature girls of different nationalities acting as hostesses cum secretaries. I went along to the casting with very little hope of landing a job. There seemed to be hundreds of girls and I didn't think I stood a chance. The only possibility for me seemed

to be the fact that I had an Equity card and they were looking for Equity girls.

Even so I was surprised when I was called back for a second casting. I had to read some bits and pieces and they asked me if I'd done that sort of thing before. It seemed better to be honest and I told them I had only worked as a model and a dancer and had never had a speaking part on a film or TV show.

They thought I was extremely beautiful and wanted to know where I was from. I told them I was from Italy.

I had worked out this story in advance to cover my tracks. I thought it was a story I could sustain. I knew Rome well, I could speak Italian pretty fluently. My story was that I had arrived in London at the age of sixteen, which was absolutely true, but from Italy not from East Anglia.

I landed the contract to appear in '3-2-1'. I was excited but apprehensive about making an idiot of myself. I had almost no experience in television and I felt things were moving too fast.

I told Yvonne about my doubts and she told me not to be silly and that all the other girls were in the same boat. Rehearsals started and I was introduced to the other girls. There was an English girl, a black girl, an American, a French girl, a half-Indian girl, and they were all very pleasant and nice. One day one of them said to me casually, in between rehearsals: 'Why is it that you've never worked with Brian?'

As lightly as I could I said: 'Brian who?'

'Brian . . .'

'Oh,' I said, trying to keep calm, 'Haven't I? I don't know. You know how things go.'

'He's wanted to book you for ages but Yvonne always tells him you're busy.'

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'How do you know him?'

'He's my boyfriend. I know he'd really like to book you.'

I changed the subject as naturally as I could but I felt as if I'd been shot with an arrow. I was petrified.

From that day on almost the only thing I could think about was that Brian would appear on the set one day, would remember me from the Latin Quarter, and click.

We finished the rehearsals, went up to Leeds, and did the first show. It went very successfully and everyone was happy.

In the train on the way back home I thought about it. I had a definite feeling that Brian had seen me and had talked to his girlfriend, because she had been looking at me in a very strange way. It was a great show, and I was getting terrific publicity, but I felt it could all turn very ugly and finish me.

I went to see my doctor and spun him some yarn about being so nervous about the show that I couldn't sleep or eat and I was cracking up. I also went to see Yvonne.

'It's not my type of thing, Yvonne,' I said, 'and I feel stupid doing it.'

'You're being silly,' she said. 'It's a wonderful start for you. Look at the publicity you're getting. Besides, we've signed a twelve-week contract.'

So I went back to my doctor, crying and pleading. I must have convinced him that I was in a bad state because he gave me a letter saying that, for medical reasons, I should not continue with the show. Yvonne forwarded the letter to the producer of the show and he agreed to release me from the contract.

But it was too late.

The press were on to me and began to hound me with endless phone calls. I worked out a story and just repeated

it to anyone who phoned and resigned myself to leaving the phone off the hook for most of the day. But when the press are after a story they don't give up easily. One morning there was a ring at the door and I opened it to find a man from one of the Sunday papers.

'We'd like to do a little story on you,' he said. 'You've been doing so well recently but now you've dropped out of the show. We'd like to know why.'

'I haven't been well,' I said. 'Some virus I picked up abroad. That's all.'

'We'd like to know a little more than that. I mean you're really hitting the headlines. Everyone wants to know where this beautiful six-foot girl comes from.'

Stupidly I thought that if I gave him an interview I could spin him a yarn that would put everybody off the track, so I invited him in.

I gave him my standard line about Italy and he began to ask some hard questions – where I went to school, that sort of thing. Suddenly he said: 'Look, I'll be honest with you. We've heard a rumour that you're a sex-change. Would you like to comment on that?'

'Obviously some bitchy model's been talking,' I said. 'You know what the modelling world's like. OK, I'm tall, I've had breast surgery – hundreds of model girls have. But you know how malicious people are in this business. They'll say anything. He's queer, she's lesbian – you know.'

'Of course – but can you prove that you're not a sex-change?'

'What do you mean, prove I'm not?'

I decided that I was getting out of my depth and rang Yvonne.

'Don't say anything,' she said. 'For God's sake don't say anything. Just tell him to go.'

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'I could show him my passport,' I said.

'Don't show him anything. That's a story in itself – a model having to prove that she's a woman. Just tell him to leave.'

I did and he went. But my phone went on ringing – the *News of the World* mainly – and I took it off the hook. I decided that I would have to see Yvonne and tell her the truth.

I was terribly upset and emotional and could hardly get the words out. I told her how desperately sorry I was to be causing so much trouble.

She was wonderful: calm, sympathetic, motherly.

'I'll do my best to protect you,' she said. 'I think we'll be able to hide it. What we need is a good solicitor.'

The next day we went to see a solicitor. He asked me point blank: 'Is it true?'

'Yes,' I said.

'I must be honest with you,' he said. 'If the papers come out with the story there's nothing we can do. It's the truth. It's a fact. But what we can do is to issue a really stinking letter, threatening to sue, and that may frighten them off. What are the chances that they'll be able to prove the story?'

I had heard from home that there were reporters going round Brooke asking a lot of questions but that neither Mum nor Dad had said anything.

'Nobody in my family will talk and nobody else knows. Whenever I visit my home I go at night. Nobody in the village has seen me.'

'Fine,' the solicitor said. 'I'll write the letter and we'll see what happens.'

By this time my family were being seriously harassed by the press, especially by Bill Rankine of the *News of the World*.

Tula

First of all he tried to locate my brother. He'd found out that he wasn't living at home but in Norwich and had gone round all his usual haunts and had left a message that Terry should contact him. Naturally, Terry did nothing of the sort. Then he got on to my Dad. He went to the bus depot in Norwich and caught him during the lunch hour. My Dad had been expecting something like that and was well prepared.

Rankine produced a whole lot of pictures and said: 'How's your daughter doing with her modelling?'

'Pam – she's doing pretty well I think.'

'I don't mean Pamela. I mean Tula.'

'Tula? I don't know any Tula – unless you mean the girl Pam shared a flat with.'

Rankine asked him how he explained the 'Two Sisters' Page 3 shot and Dad covered up beautifully, saying that he thought it had just been a publicity stunt.

He produced various pictures of me – mainly topless – and said: 'This is Tula. You're telling me that this is not your other daughter?'

'I don't have another daughter,' Dad said, 'I have two sons. One works in Norwich and the other's somewhere in Australia. We don't pry in our family. We don't hear a lot from our children.'

He played the hard-done-by father whose family had all gone their separate ways.

Finally Rankine produced some shots of me in which my hair had been touched out.

'Could that be your son?' he asked.

'Looks more like Raquel Welch to me,' Dad said.

'What would you say if you heard that your son had had a sex change?'

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'It's ridiculous,' Dad said. 'I suppose I'd feel like any father would – I'd be shocked.'

So Bill Rankine couldn't get anything out of my Dad and a few days later the solicitor's letter went out and cooled the situation right down. The press found they had to talk to the solicitor or Yvonne and they lost interest.

Meanwhile Yvonne and I decided that I should keep a low profile for a time. I took on jobs that didn't have any publicity angles and had to turn down more interesting offers such as one from Benny Hill, who wrote and said he had various ideas he wanted to discuss with me.

I did catalogue work, and a lot of work abroad, well away from the English press, and, as nothing was printed about me, I began to relax.

At about that time I met a well-known TV sports journalist – let's call him D – and we began going out. D was very handsome, six foot one tall. He was always dashing here and there and everywhere and so was I, but over the next six months we began to build a relationship. It was nothing very heavy – we never saw each other long enough for that – but it began to mean a lot to both of us.

And then a fantastic opportunity came up. A top New York agent was in London looking for girls to take to America for three to six months. She was Wilhelmina, who had been one of the top models in the sixties, appearing on more covers than Twiggy and Shrimpton combined, and now ran an agency in New York. She was looking for girls who were at least five feet nine.

We met for lunch at the Ritz and she went through my portfolio. She was very enthusiastic and excited but she gave me some good advice.

'You've got height, amazing looks, but you're doing too much glamour work. I have had all the top models working

for me and I know how it goes. If you come to America with pictures like this you'll get a lot of glamour work initially but then you'll find that it dies off. You must think of your long-term future. I believe you have a great fashion and advertising look and that's the kind of work that lasts. The other's restricted – once it starts to drop off you're finished.'

I told her that I was anyway getting tired of nude and pinup stuff, and she said she wanted me to go to New York for six months.

'It'll take three months to get you launched,' she said. 'I want to start tests and sessions here in London right now. We'll go for the sophisticated look, modelling clothes by top designers, and I'll arrange for you to get more experience on the catwalk.'

I was naturally terribly excited and flattered and began work with Wilhelmina straight away.

And then she died – very suddenly – of lung cancer. She was only forty and left a husband and children. I was sad and also bitterly disappointed. Obviously the trip was cancelled and Wilhelmina's agency collapsed; all her girls were going to other agents.

Yvonne suggested that I should go to New York anyway. There was sure to be work.

I didn't have enough confidence to do that without a contract – I'd heard that New York was a hard city – but the idea of getting out of England still appealed to me.

My hairdresser at the time was an Australian boy with whom I'd become friendly. He knew I was disappointed about the cancelled trip and wanted to get out of England. One day he said: 'Why not try Australia?' and I thought: why not? I was tired of keeping a low profile and refusing jobs that might entail publicity; I felt restricted; the prospect

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of New York had put the wandering bug in me.

Yvonne was surprised that I wanted to go to Australia rather than New York. She had no contacts there and couldn't be sure I'd get work. But she knew I needed to get away.

So I got a visa for Australia and went.

Chapter Twelve

I arrived in Sydney with nowhere to stay and very few contacts.

I did have one friend of a friend, called Stewart, who very sweetly put me up until I had recovered from the journey and could start looking for a place of my own.

I went to an estate agent and discovered that rents were so low it might be possible to have a whole house. Stewart wasn't particularly happy where he was and so we agreed to share a house together. We found a pretty little terraced house overlooking the harbour and the bridge, two minutes from the city centre. It had two bedrooms, a garden and a barbecue pit. It was all lovely except for the cockroaches, which were enormous, and the spiders. The most dangerous spiders were redbacks and funnel-webs. The red spiders were actually rather pretty little things but their bite, I was told, could kill a child and make an adult seriously ill. They tended to live in fruit and vegetables and one had to be careful about handling the shopping. There was an antidote to the red spider's bite but none for the funnel-web's bite. They were found mostly out of doors and if you were

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gardening you had to be sure that your feet and hands were covered. A bite from a web would kill you. Needless to say I left most of the gardening to Stewart.

One night, I remember, I was just about to get into bed when I saw something moving and screamed the place down. Stewart rushed in and I told him there was a huge spider in the room. We hunted round and eventually found the most gigantic cockroach. I couldn't believe the size of it: it was as big as a mouse. We sprayed it and killed it and I thought I'd send it home, in a matchbox. But it was so big it wouldn't fit in.

Meanwhile I decided to set about getting work. There were several model agencies in Sydney and I chose the best one, which had a branch in Melbourne. It was run by a lady called Vivian and when she met me, and saw my portfolio, she was terribly excited. She asked me how long I intended to stay and I said three to six months, depending.

There was no card-mailing system in Australia so the first couple of weeks were hell. I had to chase round seeing all the photographers in person – often as many as ten a day. Work started to pour in. I did TV commercials for milk and for the biggest department store in Sydney. I did shots for Australian *Vogue* and *Cosmopolitan* and lots of varied, interesting work. I felt totally relaxed, in a new place, and had no pressures.

Then Australian *Playboy* phoned Vivian and asked if they could see me. I went along and they seemed very keen to use me but the fee they offered was not very generous and I felt strongly that I was worth more. I knew that they had paid Jane Priest – the girl who kissed Prince Charles on the beach – double the normal fee and I reckoned that I'd kissed a few princes myself in my time and was worth as much. In any case, the Australian winter was coming on

and things were getting quiet whereas in London it was summer and things were busy. Vivian suggested that I should go to Japan. She told me that the Japanese loved tall girls. I could see that I'd get a lot of work in Japan but I reckoned the social life would be dull: Japanese men tend to be short – not my type.

I rang Yvonne and she told me there was a pile of work in London and so I decided to go home.

Back at home I went straight into a catalogue contract and soon after I went for a casting for an 'anything can happen' Smirnoff ad. I was featured water-skiing behind the Loch Ness monster. A few months later I was amazed to see the poster all over the place. And then, out of the blue, a casting for the new Bond film came up. I heard that the producers were looking for new Bond girls and decided to go along.

It was more like a second degree than casting. I had to sit on a chair, facing half a dozen executives, including the producer and director, and 'put my personality across.' Being me, I naturally had a couple of drinks beforehand to relax. I didn't think I'd stand a chance. Faced with that kind of thing I usually clam up and stammer. But I chatted away, about my career, what work I'd been doing and so on, and, to my amazement, at the end, they told me I'd got the job.

They explained that if I handled things correctly it would be a tremendous boost to my career. I would automatically be offered a *Playboy* centrefold, I would travel all round the world on the promotional tour, I would get tremendous publicity.

When the initial excitement had worn off and I had time to think I panicked. I suddenly realized that far from

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making me, being a Bond girl could break me. I went to Yvonne and told her I didn't think I could take the job.

'You can't go on turning down tremendous chances like this,' she said. 'If you do you might just as well give up modelling altogether. Things have been quiet for a long time now – it's a risk you've got to take.'

I felt she was right and so I signed the contract and went out to Corfu to shoot.

There was a tremendous press send-off from Heathrow and we had star treatment on the plane. There were about eight of us and I knew several of the other girls from previous modelling assignments so it was not as if I was joining some group of complete strangers.

We were put up in a modest family hotel, very quiet and comfortable, because the company felt that if we were in a big hotel we would get hassled all the time.

Three of us were invited to have dinner with the director, the casting director, and the star – Roger Moore.

Roger Moore and I got on rather well because we both spoke Italian. It was a fantastic evening: wonderful Greek food, lots of wine and ouzo, and dancing. Cubby Broccoli, the producer, was terribly kind, and a real friend to everyone in the cast, and Roger Moore was so natural and easy though difficult to work with because his sense of humour is so brilliant that we spent most of our time falling about the set with laughter.

During the week's shoot a representative of *Playboy* was introduced to me and she asked me if I would be interested in doing some shots. I said it would depend on what sort of shots and that I wanted to get away from nude stuff. She assured me that if they did anything it would be in good taste and so I said I'd do it and my agency agreed a fee.

When I got back to London *Playboy* contacted me again.

They were doing a fashion spread in Guadalupe and were short of a model. They thought that if they used me for the spread they could combine that with the publicity shots for the Bond picture. It seemed a wonderful idea and I agreed.

I almost didn't arrive in Guadalupe. For some reason I had got it into my head that it was a non-stop flight. I was very tired and when the plane landed on a West Indian island I just assumed that it was Guadalupe and got off. It wasn't until I was standing in the queue for customs that I realized that it was the wrong island. I had to rush back through the airport and re-boarded the plane in the nick of time.

Guadalupe, when I eventually arrived, absolutely exhausted, turned out to be just my idea of a West Indian island – palm trees and white beaches, and a beautiful hotel. But the marketplace, where I was due to do my fashion shots, was a shock. It reminded me of Kuwait: there were fish flapping about in buckets, a sack full of live chickens, and awful smells. I suppose it was the contrast that the photographer was after: me in supremely elegant clothes posing in a stinking, tumbledown marketplace. The locals stared at us as if we'd just landed from Mars.

Two days later we travelled up to the rain forest for the Bond pictures. It was the most wonderful place, full of every shade of green, from the exotic trees to the river with its waterfall. The river was fast-running and very cold and caused us problems. I had to pose on a rock in the river in a wrap. The current kept snatching the wrap off me and then an assistant would go chasing after it downstream. However, we got some fabulous shots, so good that they made up for the fact that when I got back to the hotel that night I found that I was covered from head to toe with mosquito bites!

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I got back to London and a few days later D rang and asked me out to dinner. We had a very merry evening – I was telling him all about the Bond picture and Guadalupe – when suddenly he said: 'I know, by the way.'

'Know what?'

'I know all about you – and your little problem. I wanted to tell you that I knew so you wouldn't think you'd had the last laugh on me.'

I was horrified, and terribly hurt by the idea that he could think that I was laughing at him. I asked him what he'd heard, who'd told him, and he said he'd picked up rumours here and there. People knew he was going out with me and had told him.

I got up to leave and he said: 'Hey, don't go, let's talk about it.'

We did talk about it. I was open and frank but still angry that he thought I had been laughing at him behind his back.

'I don't do that sort of thing,' I said. 'You know I'm very fond of you but if you've got that attitude, well, I don't want to know.'

He took me home and we talked and argued and he tried to apologize. But I felt cold. He tried to ring me for several days but Pam always answered and told him I was out. Eventually he wrote to me, a very touching letter, and we met for dinner.

We had a lovely evening and towards the end he produced a bombshell. He asked me to marry him. My immediate reaction was to say: 'You're drunk!'

'I'm not. I'm serious. Marry me.'

'I can't say yes or no just like that.'

'I understand. Think about it, though.'

I did think about it. I was terribly honoured, but I had to explain to him that because of the law I could not marry

him legally. According to my passport I was a woman, but according to my birth certificate I was a man.

I was depressed for a long time: D's proposal had brought home to me again the difficulty of my position; and his attitude over the dinner when he'd suggested I was laughing at him had killed my trust and love for him.

After some time another incident brought it home even harder. I was sitting at home one night when the phone rang. It was an American man I'd never met who was a friend of a makeup artist in the States whom I knew. He threw me off balance by saying: 'I'm told I have the same problem as you.'

'What problem's that?'

'I believe you're six feet tall,' he said. 'Well I've got news for you. I'm six feet seven!'

I was so relieved he did not come out with something else that when he asked me out to dinner I accepted. I'd never seen a man of six feet seven before and I was curious! He was staying at the Inn on the Park and he picked me up in a chauffeur-driven limousine. He'd asked me to book a table somewhere and I'd reserved at a quiet place on the Embankment, where I thought it would be peaceful and we could get to know each other. We hit it off well from the start. He was Taurus and I'm Virgo which is a good match and we seemed to click on everything. He was the head of a large cosmetics and perfume company in the States and so we could talk shop as well as everything else. He had a great sense of humour and we laughed a lot. When we danced it was as if I was five feet and for the first time in my life I found myself looking *up* to a man.

He left London the next day for Japan but said he was coming back. I couldn't wait to see him again. When he returned we had a fabulous week together, dining every

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evening, and seeing each other during the day. I could not get him out of my mind and felt that I was falling in love with him. He asked me to go back to the States with him, and I decided that I would have to tell him about myself. I invited him for a quiet evening at the flat. I felt it was only right that I should tell him before we left for America, and before giving up everything as well. But somehow I couldn't get to the point.

I asked him what I would do in America.

'Well, you wouldn't have to do anything if you didn't want to. If you wanted to work – fine – but if not . . .'

I hummed and hawed, kept starting to say: 'There's something I've got to tell you,' and then chickening out when it came to it.

'What is it, for God's sake?' he said.

'Look. Go back to your hotel and I'll phone you and tell you.'

'Don't be ridiculous. Tell me now.'

'I can't. I'm too embarrassed. I'll tell you over the phone, then, if you still want to see me, I'll come over.'

'Of course I'll still want to see you. Nothing you could say would put me off.'

He thought it was stupid but he agreed and went.

He rang me about half an hour later and I told him. He was utterly shocked and stunned but recovered himself enough to say: 'Come over.'

I went. We sat down and he looked very serious. 'You think you've got a problem,' he said. 'Well, I have one too. I've got leukaemia. The doctors have given me nine months.'

It cracked me up. I couldn't think of anything to say. The night seemed endless. We lay together, cuddled up. I could think of nothing to say to comfort him. Beside his

problem, mine seemed trivial. What seemed certain was that it was the end of our relationship. The idea of falling madly in love with a man knowing that there was only nine months was something I just couldn't face.

He went home and, except for one card, I never heard from him again, though he'd promised to write and phone. The more I thought about it, and discussed it with friends, the more I suspected that he'd made the story up to get himself out of a tricky situation. He had seemed perfectly healthy to me, not like a dying man, and it would have been a neat way of extricating himself.

One evening, out of the blue, I got a call from my Dad.

'You won't believe what I'm going to tell you,' he said.

'What?'

'That bastard from the *News of the World* has been down again, asking questions around the village.'

'You're joking,' I said and my heart seemed to drop into my feet.

After so long, I couldn't believe that the press was after me again. But when I thought about it, I realized that it was possible because of the publicity of the Bond film.

'What happened?' I said.

'He came to my work again but I told my boss I didn't want to talk to him. Then I thought he might start pestering Mum so I went out looking for him and saw him getting into his car. I went right up to him and said: "I know you. You're the bastard that was here before." I told him to push off, told him I'd got nothing to say. I really told him where to get off - I hope I haven't done anything wrong - but I could not hide my feelings any more.'

The next thing I heard was that my brother Terry had received a letter with a hint of a fee for the true story behind

Tula. My brother was horrified to think that anyone would consider him capable of betraying his own family.

'I feel like killing the bastard,' he told me.

'Try to forget all about it,' I said.

I couldn't forget it. The premiere of the Bond film at Leicester Square was just coming up and I had really been looking forward to it. But with the *News of the World* sniffing about I couldn't risk going and had to find an excuse for being out of the country at the time. I accepted a job in Rome. It was a centre-spread for *Playmen* magazine to be shot in Sardinia. I was so tense that I couldn't enjoy the beauty of Sardinia and every day I rang Pam to find out if anything had appeared in the papers. She told me that all was quiet.

So I went back to Rome to do some other work. I remember walking back to the hotel one evening, having done a bit of shopping, and feeling more at peace with myself as two months had gone by without hearing anything. But there was a message waiting for me at the desk asking me to phone London urgently. I rang Pam and she said that Yvonne had rung her. Yvonne had received a call from the *News of the World* to say that they were going to print a story on me and would she like to comment? Yvonne had denied everything, told them that I was out of the country, and then disappeared herself for the weekend.

I rushed back to London, arriving on Sunday – the day the article was due to appear. Nothing happened that Sunday but the next week Yvonne received a copy of the article with an accompanying letter asking for her comments and mine. She gave her comments over the phone. 'Well, it's good for a laugh,' she said, 'but it's utterly ridiculous. You've been nosing about for three years and if

that's all you've managed to come up with you're in the wrong job.'

She was convinced that they were bluffing again and told me not to worry. Another Sunday came and went and there was still nothing. The next week Bill Rankine phoned me himself. Pam answered the phone and he asked to speak to Caroline Cossey.

I took the phone. I was in a state but kept a hold on myself and answered coolly. He asked me if I'd read the draft of the article.

'Yes,' I said. 'I thought it was hilarious.'

He threatened to print it the next Sunday and I said: 'You go ahead and print. You'll hear from my solicitor first thing on Monday morning. I hope you can afford it.'

I put the phone down.

When nothing appeared for the following two Sundays I thought I'd managed to call their bluff. And then it happened.

Two weeks after the *News of the World* exposed me, their own brand new colour supplement carried a splash feature of me which had been shot in Las Vegas for a calendar. Next week the *Sunday Mirror*'s gossip column pointed out how absurd it was of the *News of the World* to do an exposure one week and plaster me all over the centre page, in full colour, the next. The result of that was that the *News of the World* sent a solicitor's letter to the *Sunday Mirror*!

I had by that time begun to come to terms with the exposure. I had comforted myself that at least the worst was over – nothing more could happen. And then I found different articles about myself appearing all over the world.

It was that which finally decided me to write this book.

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It seemed pointless to cover up any more, the only thing to do was to set the record straight.

I hope I have done that. I've been very honest, and I've put right some of the inaccuracies that have appeared in the press. It's been rather a painful experience, going over the past.

How it will affect my career I don't know. Obviously the risk is there but it's another one I felt I had to take. Looking back objectively over my life, as I've tried to do, I've realized that I've got at least one good quality. However bad or impossible things have been somehow I've always managed to cope. For some reason I've always refused to be put down. Whatever this book does to me, I'll struggle on.